

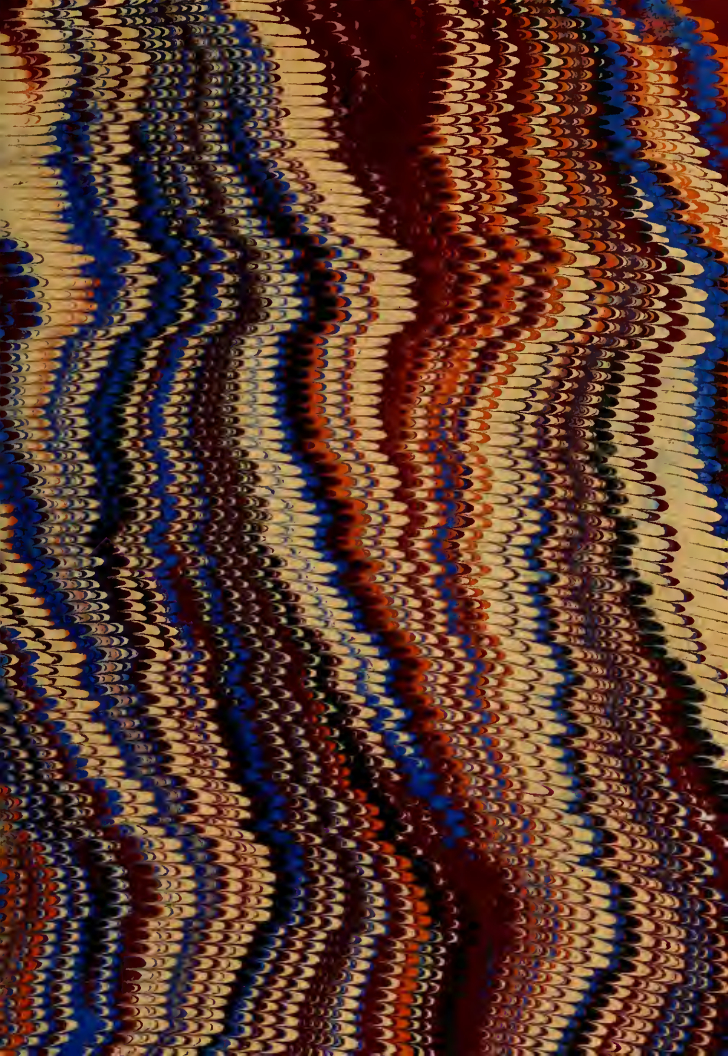


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MARION FAY.

A NOVEL.

BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE,

AUTHOR OF "FRAMLEY PARSONAGE," "ORLEY FARM,"
"THE WAY WE LIVE NOW," ETC.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

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MARION FAY.

CHAPTER I.

MR. GREENWOOD BECOMES AMBITIOUS.

MR. GREENWOOD was still anxious as to the health of the Rector of Appleslocombe. There might be even yet a hope for him; but his chance, he thought, would be better with the present Marquis—ill-disposed towards him as the Marquis was—than with the heir. The Marquis was weary of him, and anxious to get rid of him,—was acting very meanly to him, as Mr. Greenwood thought, having offered him £1000 as a final payment for a whole life's attention. The Marquis, who had ever been a liberal man, had now, perhaps on his death-bed, become unjust, harsh, and cruel. But he was weak and forgetful, and might possibly be willing to save his money and get rid of the nuisance of the whole affair by surrendering the living. This was Mr. Greenwood's reading of the circumstances as they at present existed. But the Marquis could not dispose of the living while the Rector was still alive; nor could he even promise it, to any good effect, without his son's assent. That Lord Hampstead would neither himself so bestow his patronage or allow it to be so bestowed, Mr. Greenwood

was very sure. There had been that between him and Lord Hampstead which convinced him that the young man was more hostile to him even than the father. The Marquis, as Mr. Greenwood thought, had insulted him of late;—but Lord Hampstead, young as he was, had also been insolent; and what was worse, he had insulted Lord Hampstead. There had been something in the young lord's eye which had assured him of the young lord's contempt as well as dislike. If anything could be done about the living it must be done by the Marquis. The Marquis was very ill; but it was still probable that the old rector should die first. He had been given to understand that the old rector could hardly live many weeks.

Mr. Greenwood understood but little of the young lord's character. The Marquis, no doubt, he knew well, having lived with him for many years. When he supposed his patron to be fretful and irascible because of his infirmities, but to be by nature forgiving, unreasonable, and weak, he drew an easy portrait, which was like the person portrayed. But in attributing revenge, or harshness, or pride of power to Lord Hampstead he was altogether wrong. As regarded Appleslocombe and other parishes, the patronage of which would some day belong to him, Lord Hampstead had long since made up his mind that he would have nothing to do with them, feeling himself unfit to appoint clergymen to ministrations in a Church to which he did not consider himself to belong. All that he would leave to the Bishop, thinking that the Bishop must know more about it than himself. Was his father, however, to make any request to him with reference to Appleslocombe especially, he would no doubt regard the living as bestowed before his father's death. But of all this Mr. Greenwood could

understand nothing. He felt, however, that as the Marquis had given him cause for anger, so had the young lord given him cause for hatred as well as anger.

Daily, almost hourly, these matters were discussed between Lady Kingsbury and the chaplain. There had come to be strong sympathy between them as far as sympathy can exist where the feelings are much stronger on the one side than on the other. The mother of the "darlings" had allowed herself to inveigh very bitterly against her husband's children by his former marriage, and at first had been received only half way by her confidential friend. But of late her confidential friend had become more animated and more bitter than herself, and had almost startled her by the boldness of his denunciations. She in her passion had allowed herself more than once to express a wish that her stepson——were dead. She had hardly in truth meant as much as she implied,—or meaning it had hardly thought of what she meant. But the chaplain taking the words from her lips, had repeated them till she was almost terrified by their iniquity and horror. He had no darlings to justify him! No great injury had been done to him by an unkind fortune! Great as were the sin of Lord Hampstead and his sister, they could bring no disgrace upon him! And yet there was a settled purpose of hatred in his words which frightened her, though she could not bring herself to oppose them. She in her rage had declared that it would be well that Lord Hampstead should break his neck out hunting or go down in his yacht at sea; and she had been gratified to find that her friend had sanctioned her ill-wishes. But when Mr. Greenwood spoke as though something might possibly be done to further those wishes, then she almost repented herself.

She had been induced to say that if any power

should come to her of bestowing the living of Appleslocombe she would bestow it on Mr. Greenwood. Were Lord Hampstead to die before the Marquis, and were the Marquis to die before the old rector, such power would belong to her during the minority of her eldest son. There had, therefore, been some meaning in the promise; and the clergyman had referred to it more than once or twice. "It is most improbable, you know, Mr. Greenwood," she had said very seriously. He had replied as seriously that such improbabilities were of frequent occurrence. "If it should happen I will do so," she had answered. But after that she had never of her own accord referred to the probability of Lord Hampstead's death.

From day to day there grew upon her a feeling that she had subjected herself to domination, almost to tyranny from Mr. Greenwood. The man whom she had known intimately during her entire married life now appeared to assume different proportions and almost a different character. He would still stand before her with his flabby hands hanging listlessly by his side, and with eyes apparently full of hesitation, and would seem to tremble as though he feared the effect of his own words; but still the words that fell from him were felt to be bonds from which she could not escape. When he looked at her from his lack-lustre eyes, fixing them upon her for minutes together, till the minutes seemed to be hours, she became afraid. She did not confess to herself that she had fallen into his power; nor did she realize the fact that it was so; but without realizing it she was dominated, so that she also began to think that it would be well that the chaplain should be made to leave Trafford Park. He, however, continued to discuss with her all family matters as though his services were

indispensable to her; and she was unable to answer him in such a way as to reject his confidences.

The telegram reached the butler as to Hampstead's coming on the Monday, and was, of course, communicated at once to Lord Kingsbury. The Marquis, who was now confined to his bed, expressed himself as greatly gratified, and himself told the news to his wife. She, however, had already heard it, as had also the chaplain. It quickly went through the whole household, in which among the servants there existed an opinion that Lord Hampstead ought to have been again sent for some days since. The Doctor had hinted as much to the Marchioness, and had said so plainly to the butler. Mr. Greenwood had expressed to her ladyship his belief that the Marquis had no desire to see his son, and that the son certainly had no wish to pay another visit to Trafford. "He cares more about the Quaker's daughter than anything else," he had said,—“about her and his hunting. He and his sister consider themselves as separated from the whole of the family. I should leave them alone if I were you.” Then she had said a faint word to her husband, and had extracted from him something that was supposed to be the expression of a wish that Lord Hampstead should not be disturbed. Now Lord Hampstead was coming without any invitation.

“Going to walk over, is he, in the middle of the night?” said Mr. Greenwood, preparing to discuss the matter with the Marchioness. There was something of scorn in his voice, as though he were taking upon himself to laugh at Lord Hampstead for having chosen this way of reaching his father's house.

“He often does that,” said the Marchioness.

“It's an odd way of coming into a sick house,—to

disturb it in the middle of the night." Mr. Greenwood, as he spoke, stood looking at her ladyship severely.

"How am I to help it? I don't suppose anybody will be disturbed at all. He'll come round to the side door, and one of the servants will be up to let him in. He always does things differently from anybody else."

"One would have thought that when his father was dying——"

"Don't say that, Mr. Greenwood. There's nothing to make you say that. The Marquis is very ill, but nobody has said that he's so bad as that." Mr. Greenwood shook his head, but did not move from the position in which he was standing. "I suppose that on this occasion Hampstead is doing what is right."

"I doubt whether he ever does what is right. I am only thinking that if anything should happen to the Marquis, how very bad it would be for you and the young lords."

"Won't you sit down, Mr. Greenwood?" said the Marchioness, to whom the presence of the standing chaplain had become almost intolerable.

The man sat down,—not comfortably in his chair, but hardly more than on the edge of it, so as still to have that air of restraint which had annoyed his companion. "As I was saying, if anything should happen to my lord it would be very sad for your ladyship and for Lord Frederic, and Lord Augustus, and Lord Gregory."

"We are all in the hands of God," said her ladyship, piously.

"Yes;—we are all in the hands of God. But it is the Lord's intention that we should all look out for ourselves, and do the best we can to avoid injustice, and cruelty, and,—and— robbery."

"I do not think there will be any robbery, Mr. Greenwood."

"Would it not be robbery if you and their little lordships should be turned at once out of this house?"

"It would be his own;—Lord Hampstead's,—of course. I should have Slocombe Abbey in Somersetshire. As far as a house goes, I should like it better than this. Of course it is much smaller;—but what comfort do I ever have out of a house like this?"

"That's true enough. But why?"

"There is no good in talking about it, Mr. Greenwood."

"I cannot help talking about it. It is because Lady Frances has broken up the family by allowing herself to be engaged to a young man beneath her own station in life." Here he shook his head, as he always did when he spoke of Lady Frances. "As for Lord Hampstead, I look upon it as a national misfortune that he should outlive his father."

"What can we do?"

"Well, my lady; it is hard to say. What will my feelings be, should anything happen to the Marquis, and should I be left to the tender mercies of his eldest son? I should have no claim upon Lord Hampstead for a shilling. As he is an infidel, of course he would not want a chaplain. Indeed I could not reconcile it to my conscience to remain with him. I should be cast out penniless, having devoted all my life, as I may say, to his lordship's service."

"He has offered you a thousand pounds."

"A thousand pounds, for the labours of a whole life! And what assurance shall I have of that? I don't suppose he has ever dreamed of putting it into his will. And if he has, what will a thousand pounds do for me?"

You can go to Slocombe Abbey. But the rectory, which was as good as promised, will be closed against me." The Marchioness knew that this was a falsehood, but did not dare to tell him so. The living had been talked about between them till it was assumed that he had a right to it. "If the young man were out of the way," he continued, "there would be some chance for me."

"I cannot put him out of the way," said the Marchioness.

"And some chance for Lord Frederic and his brothers."

"You need not tell me of that, Mr. Greenwood."

"But one has to look the truth in the face. It is for your sake that I have been anxious,—rather than my own. You must own that." She would not own anything of the kind. "I suppose there was no doubt about the first marriage?"

"None at all," said the Marchioness, terrified.

"Though it was thought very odd at the time. It ought to be looked to, I think. No stone ought to be left unturned."

"There is nothing to be hoped for in that direction, Mr. Greenwood."

"It ought to be looked to;—that's all. Only think what it will be if he marries, and has a son before anything is—is settled."

To this Lady Kingsbury made no answer; and after a pause Mr. Greenwood turned to his own grievances. "I shall make bold," he said, "to see the Marquis once again before Lord Hampstead comes down. He cannot but acknowledge that I have a great right to be anxious. I do not suppose that any promise would be sacred in his son's eyes, but I must do the best I can." To this

her ladyship would make no answer, and they parted, not in the best humour with each other.

That was on the Monday. On the Tuesday Mr. Greenwood, having asked to be allowed an interview, crept slowly into the sick man's room. "I hope your lordship find yourself better this morning?" The sick man turned in his bed, and only made some feeble grunt in reply. "I hear that Lord Hampstead is coming down to-morrow, my lord."

"Why should he not come?" There must have been something in the tone of Mr. Greenwood's voice which had grated against the sick man's ears, or he would not have answered so sulkily.

"Oh, no, my lord. I did not mean to say that there was any reason why his lordship should not come. Perhaps it might have been better had he come earlier."

"It wouldn't have been at all better."

"I only just meant to make the remark, my lord; there was nothing in it."

"Nothing at all," said the sick man. "Was there anything else you wished to say, Mr. Greenwood?"

The nurse all this time was sitting in the room, which the chaplain felt to be uncomfortable. "Could we be alone for a few minutes, my lord?" he asked.

"I don't think we could," said the sick man.

"There are a few points which are of so much importance to me, Lord Kingsbury."

"I ain't well enough to talk business, and I won't do it. Mr. Roberts will be here to-morrow, and you can see him."

Mr. Roberts was a man of business, or agent to the property, who lived at Shrewsbury, and whom Mr. Greenwood especially disliked. Mr. Greenwood being a clergyman was, of course, supposed to be a gentleman, and

regarded Mr. Roberts as being much beneath himself. It was not customary for Mr. Roberts to dine at the house, and he was therefore regarded by the chaplain as being hardly more than an upper servant. It was therefore very grievous to him to be told that he must discuss his own private affairs and make his renewed request as to the living through Mr. Roberts. It was evidently intended that he should have no opportunity of discussing his private affairs. Whatever the Marquis might offer him he must take; and that, as far as he could see, without any power of redress on his side. If Mr. Roberts were to offer him a thousand pounds, he could only accept the cheque and depart with it from Trafford Park, shaking off from his feet the dust which such ingratitude would forbid him to carry with him.

He was in the habit of walking daily for an hour before sunset, moving very slowly up and down the driest of the roads near the house, generally with his hands clasped behind his back, believing that in doing so he was consulting his health, and maintaining that bodily vigour which might be necessary to him for the performance of the parochial duties at Appleslocombe. Now when he had left the bed-room of the Marquis he went out of the front door, and proceeded on his walk at a somewhat quicker pace than usual. He was full of wrath, and his passion gave some alacrity to his movements. He was of course incensed against the Marquis; but his anger burnt hottest against Lord Hampstead. In this he was altogether unreasonable, for Lord Hampstead had said nothing and done nothing that could injure his position. Lord Hampstead disliked him and, perhaps, despised him, but had been anxious that the Marquis should be liberal in the mode of severing a connection which had lasted so long. But to Mr. Green-

wood himself it was manifest that all his troubles came from the iniquities of his patron's two elder children; and he remembered at every moment that Lord Hampstead had insulted him when they were both together. He was certainly not a man to forgive an enemy, or to lose any opportunity for revenge which might come in his way.

Certainly it would be good if the young man could be got to break his neck out hunting;—or good if the yacht could be made to founder, or go to pieces on a rock, or come to any other fatal maritime misfortune. But these were accidents which he personally could have no power to produce. Such wishing was infantine, and fit only for a weak woman, such as the Marchioness. If anything were to be done it must be done by some great endeavour; and the endeavour must come from himself. Then he reflected how far the Marchioness would certainly be in his power, if both the Marquis and his eldest son were dead. He did believe that he had obtained great influence over her. That she should rebel against him was of course on the cards. But he was aware that within the last month, since the date, indeed, at which the Marquis had threatened to turn him out of the house, he had made considerable progress in imposing himself upon her as a master. He gave himself in this respect much more credit than was in truth due to him. Lady Kingsbury, though she had learnt to fear him, had not so subjected herself to his influence as not to be able to throw him off should a time come at which it might be essential to her comfort to do so. But he had misread the symptoms, and had misread also the fretfulness of her impatience. He now assured himself that if anything could be done he might rely entirely on her support. After all that she had said to him, it

would be impossible that she should throw him over. Thinking of all this, and thinking also how expedient it was that something should be done, he returned to the house when he had taken the exact amount of exercise which he supposed necessary for his health.

CHAPTER II.

LIKE THE POOR CAT I' THE ADAGE.

WISHING will do nothing. If a man has sufficient cause for action he should act. "Letting I dare not wait upon I would, Like the poor cat i' the adage," never can produce results. Cherries will not fall into your mouth without picking. "If it were done, when 'tis done then 'twere well it were done quickly." If grapes hang too high what is the use of thinking of them? Nevertheless,—“Where there's a will there's a way.” But certainly no way will be found amidst difficulties, unless a man set himself to work seriously to look for it. With such self-given admonitions, counsels, and tags of old quotations as these, Mr. Greenwood went to work with himself on Monday night, and came to a conclusion that if anything were to be done it must be done at once.

Then came the question—what was the thing to be done, and what at once meant? When a thing has to be done which requires a special summoning of resolution, it is too often something which ought not to be done. To virtuous deeds, if they recommend themselves to us at all, we can generally make up our minds more easily. It was pleasanter to Mr. Greenwood to think of the thing as something in the future, as something which might possibly get itself done for him by accident, than

as an act the doing of which must fall into his own hands. Then came the "cat i' the adage," and the "when 'tis done then 'twere well," and the rest of it. Thursday morning, between four and five o' clock, when it would be pitch dark, with neither star nor moon in the heavens, when Lord Hampstead would certainly be alone in a certain spot, unattended and easily assailable;—would Thursday morning be the fittest time for any such deed as that which he had now in truth began to contemplate?

When the thing presented itself to him in this new form, he recoiled from it. It cannot be said that Mr. Greenwood was a man of any strong religious feelings. He had been ordained early in life to a curacy, having probably followed, in choosing his profession, the bent given to him by his family connections, and had thus from circumstances fallen into the household of his present patron's uncle. From that to this he had never performed a service in a church, and his domestic services as chaplain had very soon become nothing. The old Lord Kingsbury had died very soon afterwards, and Mr. Greenwood's services had been continued rather as private secretary and librarian than as domestic chaplain. He had been crafty, willing, and, though anxious, he had been able to conceal his anxiety in that respect, and ready to obey when he found it necessary. In this manner he had come to his present condition of life, and had but few of the manners or feelings of a clergyman about him. He was quite willing to take a living if it should come in his way,—but to take it with a purpose that the duties should be chiefly performed by a curate. He was not a religious man; but when he came to look the matter in the face, not on that account could he regard himself as a possible murderer without terrible doubts.

As he thought of it his first and prevailing fear did not come from the ignominious punishment which is attached to, and which generally attends, the crime. He has been described as a man flabby in appearance, as one who seemed to tremble in his shoes when called upon for any special words, as one who might be supposed to be devoid of strong physical daring. But the true character of the man was opposed to his outward bearing. Courage is a virtue of too high a nature to be included among his gifts; but he had that command of his own nerves, that free action of blood round his heart, that personal audacity coming from self-confidence, which is often taken to represent courage. Given the fact that he wanted an enemy out of the way, he could go to work to prepare to put him out of the way without exaggerated dread of the consequences as far as this world is concerned. He trusted much in himself, and thought it possible that he could so look through all the concomitant incidents of such an act as that he contemplated without allowing one to escape him which might lead to detection. He could so look at the matter, he thought, as to be sure whether this or the other plot might or might not be safe. It might be that no safe plot were possible, and that the attempt must therefore be abandoned. These, at any rate, were not the dangers which made him creep about in dismay at his own intentions.

There were other dangers of which he could not shake off the dread. Whether he had any clear hope as to eternal bliss in another life, it may be doubted. He probably drove from his mind thoughts on the subject, not caring to investigate his own belief. It is the practice of many to have their minds utterly callous in that respect. To suppose that such men think this or

think the other as to future rewards and punishments is to give them credit for a condition of mind to which they have never risen. Such a one was probably Mr. Greenwood; but nevertheless he feared something when this idea respecting Lord Hampstead presented itself to him. It was as is some boggy-bo to a child, some half-belief in a spectre to a nervous woman, some dread of undefined evil to an imaginative but melancholy man. He did not think that by meditating such a deed, by hardening his heart to the necessary resolution, by steeling himself up to its perpetration, he would bring himself into a condition unfitted for a life of bliss. His thoughts did not take any such direction. But though there might be no punishment in this world,—even though there were to be no other world in which punishment could come,—still something of evil would surely fall upon him. The conviction of the world since the days of Cain have all gone in that direction. It was thus that he allowed himself to be cowed, and to be made to declare to himself again and again that the project must be abandoned.

But “the cat i’ the adage” succeeded so far on the Tuesday in getting the better of his scruples, that he absolutely did form a plot. He did not as yet quite see his way to that security which would be indispensable;—but he did form a plot. Then came the bitter reflection that what he would do would be done for the benefit of others rather than his own. What would Lord Frederic know of his benefactor when he should come to the throne—as in such case he would do—as Marquis of Kingsbury? Lord Frederic would give him no thanks, even were he to know it,—which of course could never be the case. And why had not that woman assisted him,—she who had instigated him to the doing of the

deed? "For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind," he said to himself over and over again, not, however, in truth thinking of the deed with any of the true remorse to which Macbeth was a prey. The "filing of his mind" only occurred to him because the words were otherwise apt. Would she even be grateful when she should tell herself,—as she surely would do,—that the deed had been done by the partner of her confidences?

When he thought of the reward which was to come to him in payment of the intended deed something like a feeling of true conscience did arise within him. Might it not be the case that even he, callous as he was to most things, should find himself unable to go down to Appleslocombe and read himself in, as the phrase goes, as rector and pastor of the parish? He thought of this as he lay in his bed, and acknowledged to himself that his own audacity would probably be insufficient to carry him through such a struggle. But still on the morning when he rose he had not altogether rejected the idea. The young man had scorned him and had insulted him, and was hateful to him. But still why should he be the Macbeth, seeing that the Lady Macbeth of the occasion was untrue to him? In all this he was unaware how very little his Lady Macbeth had really meant when she had allowed herself in his presence to express wishes as to her stepson's death.

He thought he saw his plan. The weapon was there ready to his hand;—a weapon which he had not bought, which could not be traced to him, which would certainly be fatal if used with the assurance of which he was confident. And there would be ample time for retreat. But still as he arranged it all in his mind he regarded it all not as a thing fixed, but as a thing which was barely possible. It was thus that it might be done, had

the Lady Macbeth of the occasion really shown herself competent to such a task. Why should he trouble him- on such a matter? Why should he file his mind for Banquo's issue? Yet he looked at the pistol and at the window as he prepared to go up to her ladyship's room before lunch on the Wednesday morning. It certainly could be done, he said to himself, telling himself at the same time that all that had been passing in his own mind was no more than a vague speculation. A man is apt to speculate on things which have no reality to him, till they become real.

He had assumed the practice of going to her ladyship's sitting-room up-stairs without a special summons, latterly to her ladyship's great disgust. When her quarrel had first become strong with Lady Frances she had no doubt received comfort from his support. But now she had become weary of him, and had sometimes been almost dismayed by the words he spoke to her. At half-past twelve punctually she went down to her husband's room, and it was now customary with the chaplain to visit her before she did so. She had more than once almost resolved to tell him that she preferred to be left alone during the morning. But she had not as yet assumed the courage to do this. She was aware that words had fallen from her in her anger which it was possible he might use against her, were she to subject herself to his displeasure. "Lord Hampstead will be here at half-past four—what you may call the middle of the night—to-morrow morning, Lady Kingsbury," said he, repeating an assertion which he had already made to her two or three times. As he did so he stood in the middle of the room, looking down upon her with a gaze under which she had often suffered, but which she did not in the least understand.

"Of course I know he's coming."

"Don't you think it a very improper time, with a sick man in the house?"

"He won't disturb his father."

"I don't know. There will be the opening and the shutting of the door, and the servant will be going about the passages, and there will be the bringing in of the luggage."

"He won't have any luggage." Mr. Greenwood had been aware of this; but it might be well that he should affect ignorance.

"It is like everything else that he does," he said, being anxious to induce the stepmother to speak ill of her stepson. But the bent of her mind had been turned. She was not conscious of the cause which had produced the change, but she was determined to speak no further evil of her stepchildren before Mr. Greenwood. "I suppose there is nothing to be done?" said Mr. Greenwood.

"What should there be to be done? If you do remain here I wish you would sit down, Mr. Greenwood. You oppress me by standing up in that way in the middle of the room."

"I do not wonder that you should be oppressed," he said, seating himself, as was his wont, on the edge of a chair. "I am oppressed, I know. No one ever says a word to comfort me. What am I to do if anything should happen?"

"Mr. Greenwood, what is the use of all this?"

"What would you think, Lady Kingsbury, if you had to live all the rest of your life on an income arising from a thousand pounds?"

"It isn't my fault. What's the good of your coming to me with all that? I have had nothing to do with

the arrangement which Lord Kingsbury has made with you. You know very well that I do not dare even to mention your name to him, lest he should order that you should be turned out of the house."

"Turned out of the house!" he said, jumping off his chair on to his legs with an alacrity which was quite unusual to him. "Turned out of the house?—as if I were a dog! No man alive would stand such language."

"You know very well that I've always stood your friend," said the Marchioness, alarmed by the man's impetuosity.

"And you tell me that I'm to be turned out of the house."

"I only say that it would be better not to mention your name to him. I must go now, because he will be waiting for me."

"He doesn't care a straw for you; not a straw."

"Mr. Greenwood!"

"He cares only for his son and daughter;—for the son and daughter of his first wife; for those two ignoble young persons who, as you have said so often, are altogether unworthy of their name.

"Mr. Greenwood, I cannot admit this."

"Have you not said it over and over again? Have you not declared how good a thing it would be that Lord Hampstead should die? You cannot go back from all that, Lady Kingsbury."

"I must go now, Mr. Greenwood," she said, shuffling out of the room. He had altogether frightened her, and, as she went down-stairs, she determined that at whatever cost she must save herself from further private conversation with the chaplain.

Mr. Greenwood, when he was thus left alone, did not at once leave the room. He had reseated himself,

and there he remained still gazing as though there had been some one for him to gaze at, and still seated on the edge of his chair as though there were some one to see the affected humility of his position. But in truth the gazing and the manner of sitting had become so customary to him that they were assumed without thought. His mind was now full of the injury done to him by the Marchioness. She had made him her confidant; she had poured her secret thoughts into his ears; she had done her best to inspire him with her hatred and her desires;—and now, when she had almost taught him to be the minister of her wishes, she turned upon him, and upbraided him and deserted him! Of course when he had sympathized with her as to her ill-used darlings he had expected her to sympathize with him as to the hardships inflicted upon him. But she cared nothing for his hardships, and was anxious to repudiate the memory of all the hard words which she had spoken as to her husband's children. It should not be so! She should not escape from him in this manner! When confidences have been made, the persons making them must abide the consequences. When a partnership has been formed, neither partner has a right to retreat at once, leaving the burden of all debts upon the other. Had not all these thoughts, and plottings, which had been so heavy on his mind since that telegram had come, which had been so heavy on his soul, been her doing? Had not the idea come from her? Had there not been an unspoken understanding between them that in consequence of certain mutual troubles and mutual aspirations there should be a plan of action arranged between them? Now she was deserting him! Well;—he thought that he could so contrive things that she should not do so with impunity. Having considered all

this he got up from his chair and slowly walked down to his own room.

He lunched by himself, and then sat himself down with a novel, as was his wont at that hour of the day. There could be no man more punctual in all his daily avocations than Mr. Greenwood. After lunch there always came the novel; but there was seldom much of it read. He would generally go to sleep, and would remain so, enjoying perfect tranquillity for the best part of an hour. Then he would go out for his constitutional walk, after which he would again take up the novel till the time came for her ladyship's tea. On this occasion he did not read at all, but neither did he at once sleep. There had been that on his mind which, even though it had not been perfected, banished sleep from him for some minutes. There was no need of any further conversation as to safety or danger. The deed, whether it would or could not have been done in the manner he had premeditated, certainly would not be done now. Certainly not now would he file his mind for Banquo's issue. But after half-an-hour of silent meditation he did sleep.

When he arose and went out for a walk he felt that his heart was light within him. He had done nothing by which he had compromised himself. He had bound himself to no deed. As he walked up and down the road he assured himself that he had never really thought of doing it. He had only speculated as to the probability,—which is so common for men to do as to performances which they had no thought of attempting. There was a great burden gone from him. Had he desired to get rid of Lord Hampstead, it was in that way that he would have done it;—and he would so have done it that he would never have been suspected

of the deed. He had never intended more than that. As he returned to the house he assured himself that he had never intended anything more. And yet there was a great burden gone from him.

At five o'clock a message was brought to him that her ladyship, finding herself to be rather unwell, begged to be excused from asking him up to tea. The message was brought by the butler himself, with a suggestion that he should have tea in his own room. "I think I will, Harris," he said, "just take a cup. By-the-bye, Harris, have you seen my lord to-day?" Harris declared that he had seen his lordship, in a tone of voice which implied that he at any rate had not been banished from my lord's presence. "And how do you find him?" Harris thought that the Marquis was a little more like himself to-day than he had been for the last three days. "That's right. I am very glad to hear that. Lord Hampstead's coming to-morrow will be a great comfort to him."

"Yes, indeed," said Harris, who was quite on Lord Hampstead's side in the family quarrels. He had not been pleased with the idea of the Roden marriage, which certainly was unfortunate for the daughter of a Marquis; but he was by no means inclined to take part against the heir to the family honours.

"I wish he were coming at a little more reasonable hour in the day," said Mr. Greenwood with a smile. But Harris thought that the time of the day would do very well. It was the kind of thing which his lordship very often did, and Harris did not see any harm in it. This Harris said with his hand on the lock of the door, showing that he was not anxious for a prolonged conversation with the chaplain.

CHAPTER III.

LADY FRANCES SEES HER LOVER.

ON the Monday in that week,—Monday, the 5th of January, on which day Hampstead had been hunting and meditating the attack which he subsequently made on Zachary Fay, in King's Court,—Mrs. Vincent had paid a somewhat unusually long visit in Paradise Row. As the visit was always made on Monday, neither had Clara Demijohn or Mrs. Duffer been very much surprised; but still it had been observed that the brougham had been left at the "Duchess of Edinburgh" for an hour beyond the usual time, and a few remarks were made. "She is so punctual about her time generally," Clara had said. But Mrs. Duffer remarked that as she had exceeded the hour usually devoted to her friend's company she had probably found it quite as well to stay another. "They don't make half-hours in any of those yards, you know," said Mrs. Duffer. And so the matter had been allowed to pass as having been sufficiently explained.

But there had in truth been more than that in Mrs. Vincent's prolonged visit to her cousin. There had been much to be discussed, and the discussion led to a proposition made that evening by Mrs. Roden to her son by which the latter was much surprised. She was desirous of starting almost immediately for Italy, and was anxious that he should accompany her. If it were to be so he was quite alive to the expediency of going with her. "But what is it, mother?" he asked, when she had requested his attendance without giving the cause which rendered the journey necessary. Then she paused as though considering whether she would comply with his

request, and tell him that whole secret of his life which she had hitherto concealed from him. "Of course, I will not press you," he said, "if you think that you cannot trust me."

"Oh, George, that is unkind."

"What else am I to say? Is it possible that I should start suddenly upon such a journey, or that I should see you doing so, without asking the reason why? Or can I suppose if you do not tell me, but that there is some reason why you should not trust me?"

"You know I trust you. No mother ever trusted a son more implicitly. You ought to know that. It is not a matter of trusting. There may be secrets to which a person shall be so pledged that she cannot tell them to her dearest friend. If I had made a promise would you not have me keep it?"

"Promises such as that should not be exacted, and should not be made."

"But if they have been exacted and have been made? Do as I ask you now, and it is probable that everything will be clear to you before we return, or at any rate as clear to you as it is to me." After this, with a certain spirit of reticence which was peculiar with him, he made up his mind to do as his mother would have him without asking further questions. He set himself to work immediately to make the necessary arrangements for his journey with as much apparent satisfaction as though it were to be done on his own behalf. It was decided that they would start on the next Friday, travel through France and by the tunnel of the Mont Cenis to Turin, and thence on to Milan. Of what further there was to befall them he knew nothing at this period.

It was necessary in the first place that he should get leave of absence from Sir Boreas, as to which he pro-

fessed himself to be in much doubt, because he had already enjoyed the usual leave of absence allowed by the rules of the office. But on this matter he found Æolus to be very complaisant. "What, Italy?" said Sir Boreas. "Very nice when you get there, I should say, but a bad time of year for travelling. Sudden business, eh?—To go with your mother! It is bad for a lady to go alone. How long? You don't know? Well! come back as soon as you can; that's all. You couldn't take Crocker with you, could you?" For at this time Crocker had already got into further trouble in regard to imperfections of handwriting. He had been promised absolution as to some complaint made against him on condition that he could read a page of his own manuscript. But he had altogether failed in the attempt. Roden didn't think that he could carry Crocker to Italy, but arranged his own affair without that impediment.

But there was another matter which must be arranged also. It was now six weeks since he had walked with Lord Hampstead half-way back from Holloway to Hendon, and had been desired by his friend not to visit Lady Frances while she was staying at Hendon Hall. The reader may remember that he had absolutely refused to make any promise, and that there had consequently been some sharp words spoken between the two friends. There might, he had then said, arise an occasion on which he should find it impossible not to endeavour to see the girl he loved. But hitherto, though he had refused to submit himself to the demand made upon him, he had complied with its spirit. At this moment, as it seemed to him, a period had come in which it was essential to him that he should visit her. There had been no correspondence between them since those Königsgraaf days in consequence of the resolutions which she herself had

made. Now, as he often told himself, they were as completely separated as though each had determined never again to communicate with the other. Months had gone by since a word had passed between them. He was a man, patient, retentive, and by nature capable of enduring such a trouble without loud complaint; but he did remember from day to day how near they were to each other, and he did not fail to remind himself that he could hardly expect to find constancy in her unless he took some means of proving to her that he was constant himself. Thinking of all this, he determined that he would do his best to see her before he started for Italy. Should he fail to be received at Hendon Hall then he would write. But he would go to the house and make his attempt.

On Thursday morning, the day on which Hampstead arrived at Trafford Park, he went down from London, and knocking at the door asked at once for Lady Frances. Lady Frances was at home and alone;—alone altogether, having no companion with her in the house during her brother's absence. The servant who opened the door, the same who had admitted poor Crocker and had understood how much his young mistress had been dismayed when the Post Office clerk had been announced, was unwilling at once to show this other Post Office clerk into the house, although he probably understood well the difference between the two comers. "I'll go and see," he said, leaving George Roden to sit or stand in the hall as he liked best. Then the man, with a sagacity which certainly did him credit, made a round-about journey through the house, so that the lover stationed in the hall might not know that his mistress was to be reached merely by the opening of a single door. "A gentleman in the hall?" said Lady Frances.

"Mr. Roden, my lady," said the man.

"Show him in," said Lady Frances, allowing herself just a moment for consideration,—a moment so short that she trusted that no hesitation had been visible. And yet she had doubted much. She had been very clear in explaining to her brother that she had made no promise. She had never pledged herself to any one that she would deny herself to her lover should he come to see her. She would not admit to herself that even her brother, even her father, had a right to demand from her such a pledge. But she knew what were her brother's wishes on this matter, and what were the reasons for them. She knew also how much she owed to him. But she too had suffered from that long silence. She had considered that a lover whom she never saw, and from whom she never heard, was almost as bad as no lover at all. She had beaten her feathers against her cage, as she thought of this cruel separation. She had told herself of the short distance which separated Hendon from Holloway. She perhaps had reflected that had the man been as true to her as was she to him, he would not have allowed himself to be deterred by the injunctions either of father or brother. Now, at any rate, when her lover was at the door, she could not turn him away. It had all to be thought of, but it was thought of so quickly that the order for her lover's admittance was given almost without a pause which could have been felt. Then, in half a minute, her lover was in the room with her.

Need the chronicler of such scenes declare that they were in each other's arms before a word was spoken between them? The first word that was spoken came from her. "Oh, George, how long it has been!"

"It has been long to me."

"But at last you have come?"

"Did you expect me sooner? Had you not agreed with Hampstead and your father that I was not to come?"

"Never mind. You are here now. Poor papa, you know, is very ill. Perhaps I may have to go down there. John is there now."

"Is he so ill as that?"

"John went last night. We do not quite know how ill he is. He does not write, and we doubt whether we get at the truth. I was very nearly going with him; and then, sir, you would not have seen me—at all."

"Another month, another six months, another year, would have made no difference in my assurance of your truth to me."

"That is a very pretty speech for you to make."

"Nor I think in yours for me."

"I am bound, of course, to be just as pretty as you are. But why have you come now? You shouldn't have come when John had left me all alone."

"I did not know that you were here alone."

"Or you would not have come, perhaps? But you should not have come. Why did you not ask before you came?"

"Because I should have been refused. It would have been refused; would it not?"

"Certainly it would."

"But as I wish to see you specially——"

"Why specially? I have wanted to see you always. Every day has been a special want. It should have been so with you also had you been as true as I am. There should have been no special times."

"But I am going——"

"Going! Where are you going? Not for always!

You are leaving Holloway, you mean, or the Post Office." Then he explained to her that as far as he knew the journey would not be for long. He was not leaving his office, but had permission to absent himself for a time, so that he might travel with his mother as far as Milan. "Nay," said he, laughing, "why I am to do so I do not in the least know. My mother has some great Italian mystery of which she has never yet revealed to me any of the circumstances. All I know is that I was born in Italy."

"You an Italian?"

"I did not say that. There is an old saying that you need not be a horse because you were born in a stable. Nor do I quite know that I was born in Italy, though I feel sure of it. Of my father I have never known anything,—except that he was certainly a bad husband to my mother. There are circumstances which do make me almost sure that I was born in Italy; but as my mother has been unwilling to talk to me of my earliest days, I have never chosen to ask her. Now I shall perhaps know it all."

Of what else passed between them the reader need learn no details. To her the day was one of exceeding joy. A lover in China, or waging wars in Zululand or elsewhere among the distant regions, is a misfortune. A lover ought to be at hand, ready at the moment, to be kissed or scolded, to wait upon you, or, so much sweeter still, to be waited upon, just as the occasion may serve. But the lover in China is better than one in the next street or the next parish,—or only a few miles off by railway,—whom you may not see. The heart recognizes the necessity occasioned by distance with a sweet softness of tender regrets, but is hardened by mutiny, or crushed by despair in reference to stern parents or un-

suitable pecuniary circumstances. Lady Frances had been enduring the sternness of parents, and had been unhappy. Now there had come a break. She had seen what he was like, and had heard his voice, and been reassured by his vows, and had enjoyed the longed-for opportunity of repeating her own. "Nothing, nothing, nothing can change me!" How was he to be sure of that while she had no opportunity of telling him that it was so? "No time;—nothing that papa can say, nothing that John can do, will have any effect. As to Lady Kingsbury, of course you know that she has thrown me off altogether." It was nothing to him, he said, who might have thrown her off. Having her promise, he could bide his time. Not but that he was impatient; but that he knew that when so much was to be given to him at last, it behoved him to endure all things rather than to be faint of heart. And so they parted.

She, however, in spite of her joy, had a troubled spirit when he was gone. She had declared to her brother that she was bound by no promise as to seeing or not seeing her lover, but yet she was aware how much she owed to him, and that, though she had not promised, he had made a promise on her behalf, to her father. But for that promise she would never have been allowed to be at Hendon Hall. Her brother had made all his arrangements so as to provide for her a home in which she might be free from the annoyances inflicted upon her by her stepmother; but had done so almost with a provision that she should not see George Roden. She certainly had done nothing herself to infringe that stipulation; but George Roden had come, and she had seen him. She might have refused him admittance, no doubt; but then again she thought that it would have been impossible to do so. How could she have told the man to

deny her, thus professing her indifference for him in regard to whom she had so often declared that she was anxious that all the world should know that they were engaged to marry each other? It would have been impossible for her not to see him; and yet she felt that she had been treacherous to her brother, to whom she owed so much!

One thing seemed to her to be absolutely necessary. She must write at once and tell him what had occurred. Thinking of this she sat down and wrote so that she might despatch her letter by that post;—and what she wrote is here given.

“MY DEAR JOHN—

“I shall be so anxious to get news from Trafford, and to hear how you found papa. I cannot but think that were he very ill somebody would have let us know the truth. Though Mr. Greenwood is cross-grained and impertinent, he would hardly have kept us in the dark.

“Now I have a piece of news to tell you which I hope will not make you very angry. It was not my doing, and I do not know how I could have helped it. Your friend, George Roden, called to-day and asked to see me. Of course I could have refused. He was in the hall when Richard announced him, and I suppose I could have sent out word to say that I was not at home. But I think you will feel that that was in truth impossible. How is one to tell a lie to a man when one feels towards him as I do about George? Or how could I even let the servants think that I would treat him so badly? Of course every one knows about it. I want every one to know about it, so that it may be understood that I am not in the least ashamed of what I mean to do.

"And when you hear why he came I do not think that you can be angry even with him. He has been called upon, for some reason, to go at once with his mother to Italy. They start for Milan to-morrow, and he does not at all know when he may return. He had to get leave at the Post Office, but that Sir Boreas whom he talks about seems to have been very good-natured about giving it. He asked him whether he would not take Mr. Crocker with him to Italy; but that of course was a joke. I suppose they do not like Mr. Crocker at the Post Office any better than you do. Why Mrs. Roden should have to go he does not understand. All he knows is that there is some Italian secret which he will hear all about before he comes home.

"Now I really do think that you cannot be surprised that he should have come to see me when he is going to take such a journey as that. What should I have thought if I had heard that he had gone without saying a word to me about it? Don't you think that that would have been most unnatural? I should have almost broken my heart when I heard that he had started.

"I do hope, therefore, that you will not be angry with either of us. But yet I feel that I may have brought you into trouble with papa. I do not care in the least for Lady Kingsbury, who has no right to interfere in the matter at all. After her conduct everything I think is over between us. But I shall be indeed sorry if papa is vexed; and shall feel it very much if he says anything to you after all your great kindness to me.

"Your affectionate sister,

"FANNY."

"I have done one other thing to-day," said George Roden, when he was explaining to his mother on Thurs-

day evening all the preparations he had made for their journey.

"What other thing?" she asked, guessing accurately, however, the nature of the thing of which he was about to speak.

"I have seen Lady Frances."

"I thought it probable that you might endeavour to do so."

"I have done more than endeavour on this occasion. I went down to Hendon Hall, and was shown into the drawing-room. I am sorry for Hampstead's sake, but it was impossible for me not to do so."

"Why sorry for his sake?" she asked.

"Because he had pledged himself to his father that I should not do so. He clearly had no right to make such a pledge. I could not bind myself to an assurance by keeping which I might seem to show myself to be indifferent. A girl may bind herself by such a promise, but hardly a man. Had I made the promise I almost think I must have broken it. I did not make it, and therefore I have no sin to confess. But I fear I shall have done him a mischief with his father."

"And what did she say, George?"

"Oh; just the old story, mother, I suppose. What she said was what I knew just as well before I went there. But yet it was necessary that I should hear what she had to say;—and as necessary I think that she should hear me."

"Quite as necessary, I am sure," said his mother kissing his forehead.

CHAPTER IV.

MR. GREENWOOD'S FEELINGS.

ON that Wednesday night Mr. Greenwood did not sleep much. It may be doubted whether he once closed his eyes in slumber. He had indeed been saved from the performance of an act which now seemed to him to be so terrible that he could hardly believe that he had in truth contemplated it; but yet he knew,—he knew that it for some hours had been the purpose of his mind to do it! He struggled to make himself believe that it had in truth been no more than a speculation, that there had been no formed purpose, that he had only amused himself by considering how he would do such a deed without detection, if the deed were to be done. He had simply been thinking over the blunders of others, the blindness of men who had so bungled in their business as to have left easy traces for the eyes and intelligence of the world outside, and had been assuring himself how much better he could manage if the necessity of such an operation were to come upon him. That was all. No doubt he hated Lord Hampstead,—and had cause to do so. It was thus that he argued with himself. But his hatred had surely not carried him to the intention of murder!

There could have been no question of real murder; for why should he have troubled himself either with the danger or with the load which it would certainly have imposed on his conscience? Much as he hated Lord Hampstead, it was no business of his. It was that Lady Macbeth up-stairs, the mother of the darlings, who had really thought of murder. It was she who had spoken openly of her great desire that Lord Hampstead should

cease to live. Had there been any real question of murder it would have been for her to meditate, for her to think, for her to plot;—surely not for him! Certainly, certainly he had contemplated no such deed as that, with the object of obtaining for the comfort of his old age the enjoyment of the living of Appleslocombe! He told himself now that had he in truth committed such a crime, had he carried out the plot which had formed itself in his brain only as a matter of speculation, though he might not have been detected, yet he would have been suspected; and suspicion would have been as destructive to his hopes as detection. Of course all that had been clear enough to him throughout his machinations; and therefore how could he really have intended it? He had not intended it. It had only been one of those castles in the air which the old build as well as the young,—which are no more than the “airy fabrics” of the brain!

It was thus he struggled to drive from his mind and from his eyes the phantom of the terrible deed. But that he did not succeed was made evident to himself by the hot clammy drops of sweat which came out upon his brow, by his wakefulness throughout the livelong night, by the carefulness with which his ears watched for the sound of the young man's coming, as though it were necessary that he should be made assured that the murder had in truth not been done. Before that hour had come he found himself to be shaking even in his bed; to be drawing the clothes around him to dispel the icy cold, though the sweat still stood upon his brow; to be hiding his eyes under the bed-clothes in order that he might not see something which seemed to be visible to him through the utmost darkness of the chamber. At any rate he had done nothing! Let his thoughts have been

what they might, he had soiled neither his hands nor his conscience. Though everything that he had ever done or ever thought were known, he was free from all actual crime. She had talked of death and thought of murder. He had only echoed her words and her thoughts, meaning nothing,—as a man is bound to do to a woman. Why then could he not sleep? Why should he be hot and shiver with cold by turns? Why should horrid phantoms perplex him in the dark? He was sure he had never meant it. What must be the agony of those who do mean, of those who do execute, if such punishment as this were awarded to one who had done no more than build a horrid castle in the air? Did she sleep;—he wondered,—she who had certainly done more than build a castle in the air; she who had wished and longed, and had a reason for her wishing and her longing?

At last he heard a footfall on the road, which passed but some few yards distant from his window, a quick, cheery, almost running footfall, a step full of youth and life, sounding crisp on the hard frozen ground; and he knew that the young man whom he hated had come. Though he had never thought of murdering him,—as he told himself,—yet he hated him. And then his thoughts, although in opposition to his own wishes;—which were intent upon sleep, if sleep would only come to him,—ran away to the building of other castles. How would it have been now, now at this moment, if that plan, which he had never really intended to carry out, which had only been a speculation, had been a true plan and been truly executed? How would it have been with them all now at Trafford Park? The Marchioness would have been at any rate altogether satisfied;—but what comfort would there have been in that to him? Lord Frederic would

have been the heir to a grand title and to vast estates;—but how would he have been the better for that? The old lord who was lying there so sick in the next room might probably have sunk into his grave with a broken heart. The Marquis had of late been harsh to him; but there did come to him an idea at the present moment that he had for thirty years eaten the sick man's bread. And the young man would have been sent without a moment's notice to meet his final doom! Of what nature that might have been, the wretched man lying there did not dare even to make a picture in his imagination. It was a matter which he had sedulously and successfully dismissed from all his thoughts. It was of the body lying out there in the cold, not of the journey which the winged soul might make, that he unwillingly drew a picture to himself. He conceived how he himself, in the prosecution of the plan which he had formed, would have been forced to have awakened the house, and to tell of the deed, and to assist in carrying the body to what resting-place might have been found for it. There he would have had to enact a part of which he had, a few hours since, told himself that he would be capable, but in attempting which he was now sure that he would have succumbed to the difficulties of the struggle. Who would have broken the news to the father? Who would have attempted to speak the first word of vain consolation? Who would have flown to the lady's door up-stairs and have informed her that death was in the house—and have given her to understand that the eldest of her darlings was the heir? It would have been for him to do it all; for him with a spirit weighed down to the ground by that terrible burden with which the doing of such a deed would have loaded it. He would certainly have revealed himself in the struggle!

But why should he allow his mind to be perplexed with such thoughts? No such deed had been done. There had been no murder. The young man was there now in the house, light-hearted after his walk; full of life and youthful energy. Why should he be troubled with such waking dreams as these? Must it be so with him always, for the rest of his life, only because he had considered how a thing might best be done? He heard a footstep in a distant passage, and a door closed, and then again all was silent. Was there not cause to him for joy in the young man's presence? If his speculations had been wicked, was there not time to turn for repentance,—for repentance, though there was so little for which repentance were needed? Nevertheless the night was to him so long, and the misery connected with the Trafford name so great, that he told himself that he would quit the place as soon as possible. He would take whatever money were offered to him and go. How would it have been with him had he really done the deed, when he found himself unable to sleep in the house in which he would not quite admit to himself that he had even contemplated it?

On the next morning his breakfast was brought to him in his own room, and he inquired from the servant after Lord Hampstead and his purposes. The servant thought that his lordship meant to remain on that day and the next. So he had heard Harris, the butler, say. His lordship was to see his father at eleven o'clock that morning. The household bulletin respecting the Marquis had that morning been rather more favourable than usual. The Marchioness had not yet been seen. The doctor would probably be there by twelve. This was the news which Mr. Greenwood got from the servant who waited upon him. Could he not escape from the

house during the period that the young lord would be there, without seeing the young lord? The young lord was hateful to him—more hateful than ever. He would, if possible, get himself carried into Shrewsbury, and remain there on some excuse of visiting a friend till the young lord should have returned to London. He could not tell himself why, but he felt that the sight of the young lord would be oppressive to him.

But in this he was prevented by an intimation that was given to him early in the day, before he had made preparations for his going, that Lord Hampstead wished to see him, and would wait upon him in his own room. The Marquis had expressed himself grateful to his son for coming, but did not wish to detain him at Trafford. "Of course it is very dull for you, and I think I am better."

"I am so glad of that;—but if you think that I am of any comfort to you I shall be delighted to stay. I suppose Fanny would come down if I remain here."

Then the Marquis shook his head. Fanny, he thought, had better be away. "The Marchioness and Fanny would not be happy in the house together,—unless, indeed, she has given up that young man." Hampstead could not say that she had given up the young man. "I do hope she never sees him," said the Marquis. Then his son assured him that the two had never met since Fanny had gone to Hendon Hall. And he was rash enough to assure his father that there would be no such meeting while his sister was his guest. At that moment George Roden was standing in the drawing-room at Hendon Hall with Lady Frances in his arms.

After that there arose a conversation between the father and son as to Mr. Greenwood. The Marquis was very desirous that the man who had become so objec-

tionable to him should quit the house. "The truth is," said the Marquis, "that it is he who makes all the mischief between me and your stepmother. It is he that makes me ill. I have no comfort while he is here, making plots against me." If they two had only known the plot which had been made! Hampstead thought it reasonable that the man should be sent away, if only because his presence was disagreeable. Why should a man be kept in the house simply to produce annoyance? But there must be the question of compensation. He did not think that £1000 was sufficient. Then the Marquis was unusually difficult of persuasion in regard to money. Hampstead thought that an annuity of £300 a year should be settled on the poor clergyman. The Marquis would not hear of it. The man had not performed even the slight duties which had been required of him. The books had not even been catalogued. To bribe a man, such as that, by £300 a year for making himself disagreeable would be intolerable. The Marquis had never promised him anything. He ought to have saved his money. At last the father and son came to terms, and Hampstead sent to prepare a meeting with the chaplain.

Mr. Greenwood was standing in the middle of the room when Lord Hampstead entered it, rubbing his fat hands together. Hampstead saw no difference in the man since their last meeting, but there was a difference. Mr. Greenwood's manner was at first more submissive, as though he were afraid of his visitor; but before the interview was over he had recovered his audacity. "My father has wished me to see you," said Hampstead. Mr. Greenwood went on rubbing his hands, still standing in the middle of the room. "He seems to think it better that you should leave him."

"I don't know why he should think it better;—but,

of course, I will go if he bids me." Mr. Greenwood had quite made up his mind that it would be better for him also that he should go.

"There will be no good in going into that. I think we might as well sit down, Mr. Greenwood." They did sit down, the chaplain as usual perching himself on the edge of a chair. "You have been here a great many years."

"A great many, Lord Hampstead;—nearly all my life;—before you were born, Lord Hampstead." Then, as he sat gazing, there came before his eyes the phantom of Lord Hampstead being carried into the house as a corpse while he himself was struggling beneath a portion of the weight.

"Just so; and though the Marquis cannot admit that there is any claim upon him——"

"No claim, Lord Hampstead!"

"Certainly no claim. Yet he is quite willing to do something in acknowledgment of the long connection. His lordship thinks that an annuity of £200 a year——." Mr. Greenwood shook his head, as though he would say that that certainly would not satisfy him. Hampstead had been eager to secure the full £300 for the wretched, useless man, but the Marquis had declared that he would not burden the estate with a charge so unnecessarily large. "I say," continued Hampstead, frowning, "that his lordship has desired me to say that you shall receive during your life an annuity of £200." It certainly was the fact that Lord Hampstead could frown when he was displeased, and that at such moments he would assume a look of aristocratic impatience which was at variance with his professed political theories. Mr. Greenwood again shook his head. "I do not think that I need say anything farther," continued the young lord,

"That is my father's decision. He presumes that you would prefer the annuity to the immediate payment of a thousand pounds." Here the shaking of the head became more violent. "I have only in addition to ask you when it will suit you to leave Trafford Park." Lord Hampstead, when he had left his father, had determined to use his blindest manner in communicating these tidings to the chaplain. But Mr. Greenwood was odious to him. The way in which the man stood on the floor and rubbed his hands together, and sat on the edge of his chair, and shook his head without speaking a word, were disgusting to him. If the man had declared boldly his own view of what was due to him, Hampstead would have endeavoured to be gracious to him. As it was he was anything but gracious, as he asked the chaplain to name the day on which he would be prepared to leave the house.

"You mean to say that I am to be——turned out."

"It is some months since you were told that my father no longer required your services."

"I am to be turned out,—like a dog,—after thirty years!"

"I cannot contradict you when you say so, but I must ask you to name a day. It is not as though the suggestion were now made to you for the first time." Mr. Greenwood got up from the edge of the chair, and again stood in the middle of the room. Lord Hampstead felt himself constrained also to stand. "Have you any answer to make to me?"

"No; I have not," said the chaplain.

"You mean that you have not fixed upon a day?"

"I shan't go with £200 a year," said the chaplain. "It's unreasonable; it's brutal!"

"Brutal!" shouted Lord Hampstead.

"I shan't stir till I've seen the Marquis himself. It's out of the question that he should turn me out in this way. How am I to live upon £200 a year? I always understood that I was to have Appleslocombe."

"No such promise was ever made to you," said Lord Hampstead, very angrily. "No hint of such a thing has ever been made except by yourself."

"I always understood it," said Mr. Greenwood. "And I shall not leave this till I've had an opportunity of discussing the matter with the Marquis himself. I don't think the Marquis would ever have treated me in this way,—only for you, Lord Hampstead."

This was intolerable. What was he to do with the abominable man? It would be very disagreeable, the task of turning him out while the Marquis was still so ill, and yet it was not to be endured that such a man should be allowed to hold his position in the house in opposition to the will of the owner. It was, he felt, beneath him to defend himself against the charge made—or even to defend his father. "If you will not name a day, I must," said the young lord. The man remained immovable on his seat except that he continued to rub his hands. "As I can get no answer I shall have to instruct Mr. Roberts that you cannot be allowed to remain here after the last day of the month. If you have any feeling left to you you will not impose upon us so unpleasant a duty while my father is ill." With this he left the room, while Mr. Greenwood was still standing and rubbing his hands.

Two hundred pounds a year! He had better go and take it. He was quite aware of that. But how was he to live upon £200,—he who had been bedded and boarded all his life at the expense of another man, and had also spent £300? But at the moment this was not

the thought uppermost in his mind. Would it not have been better that he should have carried out that project of his? Only that he had been merciful, this young lord would not have been able to scorn him and ill-treat him as he had done. There were no phantoms now. Now he thought that he could have carried his share of the corpse into the house without flinching.

CHAPTER V.

"THAT WOULD BE DISAGREEABLE."

THINGS at Trafford on that day and on the next were very uncomfortable. No house could possibly be more so. There were four persons who, in the natural course of things, would have lived together, not one of whom would sit down to table with any other. The condition of the Marquis, of course, made it impossible that he should do so. He was confined to his room, in which he would not admit Mr. Greenwood to come near him, and where his wife's short visits did not seem to give him much satisfaction. Even with his son he was hardly at his ease, seeming to prefer the society of the nurse, with occasional visits from the doctor and Mr. Roberts. The Marchioness confined herself to her own room, in which it was her intention to prevent the inroads of Mr. Greenwood as far as it might be possible. That she should be able to exclude him altogether was more than she could hope, but much, she thought, could be done by the dint of headaches, and by a resolution never to take her food down-stairs. Lord Hampstead had declared his purpose to Harris, as well as to his father, never again to sit down to table with Mr. Greenwood. "Where does he dine?" he asked the butler. "Generally in the

family dining-room, my lord," said Harris. "Then give me my dinner in the breakfast parlour." "Yes, my lord," said the butler, who at once resolved to regard Mr. Greenwood as an enemy of the family. In this manner Mr. Greenwood gave no trouble, as he had his meat sent to him in his own sitting-room. But all this made the house very uncomfortable.

In the afternoon Mr. Roberts came over from Shrewsbury, and saw Lord Hampstead. "I knew he would make himself disagreeable, my lord," said Mr. Roberts.

"How did you know it?"

"Things creep out. He had made himself disagreeable to his lordship for some months past; and then we heard that he was talking of Appleslocombe as though he were certain to be sent there."

"My father never thought of it."

"I didn't think he did. Mr. Greenwood is the idlest human being that ever lived, and how could he have performed the duties of a parish?"

"He asked my father once, and my father flatly refused him."

"Perhaps her ladyship——," suggested Mr. Roberts, with some hesitation.

"At any rate he is not to have Appleslocombe, and he must be made to go. How is it to be done?" Mr. Roberts raised his eyebrows. "I suppose there must be some means of turning an objectionable resident out of a house."

"The police, of course, could carry him out—with a magistrate's order. He would have to be treated like any other vagrant."

"That would be disagreeable."

"Very disagreeable, my lord," said Mr. Roberts. "My lord should be saved from that if possible."

"How if we gave him nothing to eat?" said Lord Hampstead.

"That would be possible; but it would be troublesome. What if he resolved to remain and be starved? It would be seeing which would hold out the longer. I don't think my lord would have the heart to keep him twenty-four hours without food. We must try and save my lord from what is disagreeable as much as we can." Lord Hampstead was in accord as to this, but did not quite see his way how to effect it. There were still, however, more than three weeks to run before the day fixed for the chaplain's exit, and Mr. Roberts suggested that it might in that time be fully brought home to the man that his £200 a year would depend on his going. "Perhaps you'd better leave him to me, my lord," said Mr. Roberts; "and I shall deal with him better when you're not here."

When the time came for afternoon tea Mr. Greenwood, perceiving that no invitation came to him from the Marchioness, sent a note up to her asking for the favour of an interview. "He had a few words to say, and would be much obliged to her if she would allow him to come to her." On receiving this she pondered for some time before she could make up her mind as to what answer she should give. She would have been most anxious to do as she had already heard that Lord Hampstead had done, and decline to meet him at all. She could not analyze her own feelings about the man, but had come during the last few days to hold him in horror. It was as though something of the spirit of the murderer had shown itself to her in her eyes. She had talked glibly, wickedly, horribly of the death of the man who had seemed to stand in her way. She had certainly wished for it. She had taught herself to think, by some

ultra-feminine lack of logic, that she had really been injured in that her own eldest boy had not been born heir to his father's titles. She had found it necessary to have some recipient for her griefs. Her own sister, Lady Persiflage, had given her no comfort, and then she had sought for and had received encouragement from her husband's chaplain. But in talking of Lord Hampstead's death she had formed no plan. She had only declared in strong language that if, by the hand of Providence, such a thing should be done, it would be to her a happy chance. She had spoken out where another more prudent than she would perhaps only have wished. But this man had taken up her words with an apparently serious purpose which had frightened her; and then, as though he had been the recipient of some guilty secret, he had laid aside the respect which had been usual to him, and had assumed a familiarity of co-partnership which had annoyed and perplexed her. She did not quite understand it all, but was conscious of a strong desire to be rid of him. But she did not dare quite as yet to let him know that such was her purpose, and she therefore sent her maid down to him with a message. "Mr. Greenwood wants to see me," she said to the woman. "Will you tell him with my compliments that I am not very well, and that I must beg him not to stay long."

"Lord Hampstead has been a' quarrelling with Mr. Greenwood, my lady,—this very morning," said the maid.

"Quarrelling, Walker?"

"Yes, my lady. There has been ever so much about it. My lord says as he won't sit down to dinner with Mr. Greenwood on no account, and Mr. Roberts has been here, all about it. He's to be turned away."

"Who is to be turned away?"

"Mr. Greenwood, my lady. Lord Hampstead has been about it all the morning. It's for that my lord the Marquis has sent for him, and nobody's to speak to him till he's packed up everything, and taken himself right away out of the house."

"Who has told you all that, Walker?" Walker, however, would not betray her informant. She answered that it was being talked of by everybody down-stairs, and she repeated it now only because she thought it proper that "my lady" should be informed of what was going on. "My lady" was not sorry to have received the information even from her maid, as it might assist her in her conversation with the chaplain.

On this occasion Mr. Greenwood sat down without being asked. "I am sorry to hear that you are so unwell, Lady Kingsbury."

"I have got one of my usual headaches;—only it's rather worse than usual."

"I have something to say which I am sure you will not be surprised that I should wish to tell you. I have been grossly insulted by Lord Hampstead."

"What can I do?"

"Well;—something ought to be done."

"I cannot make myself answerable for Lord Hampstead, Mr. Greenwood."

"No; of course not. He is a young man for whom no one would make himself answerable. He is headstrong, violent, and most uncourteous. He has told me very rudely that I must leave the house by the end of the month."

"I suppose the Marquis had told him."

"I don't believe it. Of course the Marquis is ill,

and I could bear much from him. But I won't put up with it from Lord Hampstead."

"What can I do?"

"Well;—after what has passed between us, Lady Kingsbury,——" He paused, and looked at her as he made this appeal. She compressed her lips and collected herself, and prepared for the fight which she felt was coming. He saw it all, and prepared himself also. "After what has passed between us, Lady Kingsbury," he said, repeating his words, "I think you ought to be on my side."

"I don't think anything of the kind. I don't know what you mean about sides. If the Marquis says you're to go, I can't keep you."

"I'll tell you what I've done, Lady Kingsbury. I have refused to stir out of this house till I've been allowed to discuss the matter with his lordship; and I think you ought to give me your countenance. I'm sure I've always been true to you. When you have unburdened your troubles to my ears I have always been sympathetic. When you have told me what a trouble this young man has been to you, have not I always,—always,—always taken your part against him?" He almost longed to tell her that he had formed a plan for ridding her altogether of the obnoxious young man; but he could not find the words in which to do this. "Of course I have felt that I might depend upon you for assistance and countenance in this house."

"Mr. Greenwood," she said, "I really cannot talk to you about these things. My head is aching very badly, and I must ask you to go."

"And that is to be all?"

"Don't you hear me tell you that I cannot interfere?" Still he kept that horrid position of his upon the chair,

staring at her with his large, open, lustreless eyes. "Mr. Greenwood, I must ask you to leave me. As a gentleman you must comply with my request."

"Oh," he said; "very well! Then I am to know that after thirty years' faithful service all the family has turned against me. I shall take care——" But he paused, remembering that were he to speak a word too much, he might put in jeopardy the annuity which had been promised him; and at last he left the room.

Of Mr. Greenwood no one saw anything more that day, nor did Lord Hampstead encounter him again before he returned to London. Hampstead had arranged to stay at Trafford during the following day, and then to return to London, again using the night mail train. But on the next morning a new trouble fell upon him. He received his sister's letter, and learned that George Roden had been with her at Hendon Hall. He had certainly pledged himself that there should be no such meeting, and had foolishly renewed this pledge only yesterday. When he read the letter he was vexed, chiefly with himself. The arguments which she had used as to Roden's coming, and also those by which she had excused herself for receiving him, did seem to him to be reasonable. When the man was going on such a journey it was natural that he should wish to see the girl he loved; and natural that she should wish to see him. And he was well aware that neither of them had pledged themselves. It was he only who had given a pledge, and that as to the conduct of others who had refused to support him in it. Now his pledge had been broken, and he felt himself called upon to tell his father of what had occurred. "After all that I told you yesterday," he said, "George Roden and Fanny have met each other." Then he attempted to make the best excuse

he could for this breach of the promise which he had made.

"What's the good?" said the Marquis. "They can't marry each other. I wouldn't give her a shilling if she were to do such a thing without my sanction." Hampstead knew very well that, in spite of this, his father had made by his will ample provision for his sister, and that it was very improbable that any alteration in this respect would be made, let his sister's disobedience be what it might. But the Marquis seemed hardly to be so much affected as he had expected by these tidings. "Whatever you do," said the Marquis, "don't let her ladyship know it. She would be sure to come down to me and say it was all my fault; and then she would tell me what Mr. Greenwood thought about it." The poor man did not know how little likely it was that she would ever again throw Mr. Greenwood in his teeth.

Lord Hampstead had not as yet even seen his stepmother, but had thought it no more than decent to send her word that he would wait upon her before he left the house. All domestic troubles he knew to be bad. For his stepmother's sake, and for that of his sister and little brothers, he would avoid as far as might be possible any open rupture. He therefore went to the Marchioness before he ate his dinner. "My father is much better," he said; but his stepmother only shook her head, so that there was before him the task of recommencing the conversation. "Dr. Spicer says so."

"I am not sure that Mr. Spicer knows much about it."

"He thinks so himself."

"He never tells me what he thinks. He hardly tells me anything."

"He is not strong enough for much talking."

"He will talk to Mr. Roberts by the hour together. So I hear that I am to congratulate you." This she said in a tone which was clearly intended to signify both condemnation and ridicule.

"I am not aware of it," said Hampstead with a smile.

"I suppose it is true about the Quaker lady?"

"I can hardly tell you, not knowing what you may have heard. There can be no room for congratulation, as the lady has not accepted the offer I have made her." The Marchioness laughed incredulously,—with a little affected laugh in which the incredulity was sincere.—"I can only tell you that it is so."

"No doubt you will try again?"

"No doubt."

"Young ladies in such circumstances are not apt to persevere in their severity. Perhaps it may be supposed that she will give way at last."

"I cannot take upon myself to answer that, Lady Kingsbury. The matter is one on which I am not particularly anxious to talk. Only as you asked me I thought it best just to tell you the facts."

"I am sure I am ever so much obliged to you. The young lady's father is——"

"The young lady's father is a clerk in a merchant's office in the City."

"So I understand,—and a Quaker?"

"And a Quaker."

"And I believe he lives at Holloway."

"Just so."

"In the same street with that young man whom Fanny has—has chosen to pick up."

"Marion Fay and her father live at No. 17, Paradise Row, Holloway; and Mrs. Roden and George Roden live at No. 10."

"Exactly. We may understand, therefore, how you became acquainted with Miss Fay."

"I don't think you can. But if you wish to know I will tell you that I first saw Miss Fay at Mrs. Roden's house."

"I suppose so."

Hampstead had begun this interview with perfect good humour; but there had gradually been growing upon him that tone of defiance which her little speeches to him had naturally produced. Scorn would always produce scorn in him, as would ridicule and satire produce the same in return. "I do not know why you should have supposed so, but such was the fact. Neither had George Roden or my sister anything to do with it. Miss Fay is a friend of Mrs. Roden, and Mrs. Roden introduced me to the young lady."

"I am sure we are all very much obliged to her."

"I am, at any rate,—or shall be if I succeed at last."

"Poor fellow! It will be very piteous if you too are thwarted in love."

"I'll say good-bye, my lady," said he; getting up to leave her.

"You have told me nothing of Fanny."

"I do not know that I have anything to tell."

"Perhaps she also will be jilted."

"I should hardly think so."

"Because, as you tell me, she is not allowed to see him." There was a thorough disbelief expressed in this which annoyed him. It was as though she had expressed her opinion that the lovers were encouraged to meet daily in spite of the pledge which had been given. And then the pledge had been broken; and there would be a positive lie on his part if he were

now to leave her with the idea that they had not met. "You must find it hard to keep them apart, as they are so near."

"I have found it too hard, at any rate."

"Oh, you have?"

"They did meet yesterday."

"Oh, they did. Directly your back was turned?"

"He was going abroad, and he came; and she has written to tell me of it. I say nothing of myself, Lady Kingsbury; but I do not think you can understand how true she can be,—and he also."

"That is your idea of truth."

"That is my idea of truth, Lady Kingsbury; which, as I said before, I am afraid I cannot explain to you. I have never meant to deceive you; nor have they."

"I thought a promise was a promise," she said. Then he left her, condescending to make no further reply. On that night he went back to London, with a sad feeling at his heart that his journey down to Trafford had done no good to any one. He had, however, escaped a danger of which he had known nothing.

CHAPTER VI.

"I DO."

LORD HAMPSTEAD did not reach his house till nearly six on the following morning, and, having been travelling two nights out of three, allowed himself the indulgence of having his breakfast in bed. While he was so engaged his sister came to him, very penitent for her fault, but ready to defend herself should he be too severe to her. "Of course I am very sorry because

of what you had said. But I don't know how I am to help myself. It would have looked so very strange."

"It was unfortunate—that's all."

"Was it so very unfortunate, John?"

"Of course I had to tell them down there."

"Was papa angry?"

"He only said that if you chose to make such a fool of yourself, he would do nothing for you—in the way of money."

"George does not think of that in the least."

"People must eat, you know."

"Ah; that would make no difference either to him or to me. We must wait, that's all. I do not think it would make me unhappy to wait till I died, if he only were content to wait also. But was papa so very angry?"

"He wasn't so very angry,—only angry. I was obliged to tell him; but I said as little to him as possible because he is ill. Somebody else made herself disagreeable."

"Did you tell her?"

"I was determined to tell her;—so that she should not turn round upon me afterwards and say that I had deceived her. I had made a promise to my father."

"Oh, John, I am so sorry."

"There is no use in crying after spilt milk. A promise to my father she would of course take as a promise to her, and it would have been flung in my face."

"She will do so now."

"Oh, yes;—but I can fight the battle better, having told her everything."

"Was she disagreeable?"

"Abominable! She mixed you up with Marion Fay, and really showed more readiness than I gave her credit

for in what she said. Of course she got the better of me. She could call me a liar and a fool to my face, and I could not retaliate. But there's a row in the house which makes everything wretched there."

"Another row?"

"You are forgotten in this new row,—and so am I. George Roden and Marion Fay are nothing in comparison with poor Mr. Greenwood. He has been committing horrible offences, and is to be turned out. He swears he won't go, and my father is determined he shall. Mr. Roberts has been called in, and there is a question whether Harris shall not put him on gradually diminished rations till he be starved into surrender. He's to have £200 a year if he goes, but he says that it is not enough for him."

"Would it be much?"

"Considering that he likes to have everything of the very best I do not think it would. He would probably have to go to prison or else hang himself."

"Won't it be rather hard upon him?"

"I think it will. I don't know what it is that makes the governor so hard to him. I begged and prayed for another hundred a year as though he were the dearest friend I had in the world; but I couldn't turn the governor an inch. I don't think I ever disliked any one so much in the world as I do Mr. Greenwood."

"Not Mr. Crocker?" she asked.

"Poor Crocker! I love Crocker, in comparison. There is a delightful pachydermatousness about Crocker which is almost heroic. But I hate Mr. Greenwood, if it be in my nature to hate any one. It is not only that he insults me, but he looks at me as though he would take me by the throat and strangle me if he could. But still I will add the other hundred a year out of my own

pocket, because I think he is being treated hardly. Only I must do it on the sly."

"But Lady Kingsbury is still fond of him?"

"I rather think not. I fancy he has made himself too free with her, and has offended her. However, there he is shut up all alone, and swearing that he won't stir out of the house till something better is done for him."

There were two matters now on Lord Hampstead's mind to which he gave his attention, the latter of which, however, was much the more prominent in his thoughts. He was anxious to take his sister down to Gorse Hall, and there remain for the rest of the hunting season, making such short runs up to Holloway as he might from time to time find to be necessary. No man can have a string of hunters idle through the winter without feeling himself to be guilty of an unpardonable waste of property. A customer at an eating-house will sometimes be seen to devour the last fragments of what has been brought to him, because he does not like to abandon that for which he must pay. So it is with the man who hunts. It is not perhaps that he wants to hunt. There are other employments in life which would at the moment be more to his taste. It is his conscience which prompts him,—the feeling that he cannot forgive himself for intolerable extravagance if he does not use the articles with which he has provided himself. You can neglect your billiard-table, your books, or even your wine-cellar,—because they eat nothing. But your horses soon eat their heads off their own shoulders if you pass weeks without getting on their backs. Hampstead had endeavoured to mitigate for himself this feeling of improvidence by running up and down to Aylesbury; but the saving in this

respect was not sufficient for his conscience, and he was therefore determined to balance the expenditure of the year by a regular performance of his duties at Gorse Hall. But the other matter was still more important to him. He must see Marion Fay before he went into Northamptonshire, and then he would learn how soon he might run up with the prospect of seeing her again. The distance of Gorse Hall and the duty of hunting would admit of certain visits to Holloway. "I think I shall go to Gorse Hall to-morrow," he said to his sister as soon as he had come down from his room.

"All right; I shall be ready. Hendon Hall or Gorse Hall,—or any other Hall, will be the same to me now." Whereby she probably intended to signify that as George Roden was on his way to Italy all parts of England were indifferent to her.

"But I am not quite certain," said he.

"What makes the doubt?"

"Holloway, you know, has not been altogether deserted. The sun no doubt has set in Paradise Row, but the moon remains." At this she could only laugh, while he prepared himself for his excursion to Holloway.

He had received the Quaker's permission to push his suit with Marion, but he did not flatter himself that this would avail him much. He felt that there was a strength in Marion which, as it would have made her strong against her father had she given away her heart without his sanction, so would it be but little moved by any permission coming from him. And there was present to the lover's mind a feeling of fear which had been generated by the Quaker's words as to Marion's health. Till he had heard something of that story of the mother and her little ones, it had not occurred to him that the girl herself was wanting in any gift of

physical well-being. She was beautiful in his eyes, and he had thought of nothing further. Now an idea had been put into his head which, though he could hardly realize it, was most painful to him. He had puzzled himself before. Her manner to him had been so soft, so tender, so almost loving, that he could not but hope, could hardly not think, that she loved him. That, loving him, she should persist in refusing him because of her condition of life, seemed to him to be unnatural. He had, at any rate, been confident that, were there nothing else, he could overcome that objection. Her heart, if it were really given to him, would not be able to support itself in its opposition to him upon such a ground of severance as that. He thought that he could talk her out of so absurd an argument. But in that other argument there might be something that she would cling to with persistency.

But the Quaker himself had declared that there was nothing in it. "As far as I know," the Quaker had said, "she is as fit to become a man's wife as any other girl." He surely must have known had there been any real cause. Girls are so apt to take fancies into their heads, and then will sometimes become so obstinate in their fancies! In this way Hampstead discussed the matter with himself, and had been discussing it ever since he had walked up and down Broad Street with the Quaker. But if she pleaded her health, he had what her own father had said to use as an argument with which to convince her. If she spoke again of his rank, he thought that on that matter his love might be strong enough as an argument against her,—or perhaps her own.

He found no trouble in making his way into her presence. She had heard of his visit to King's Court, and knew that he would come. She had three things

which she had to tell him, and she would tell them all very plainly if all should be necessary. The first was that love must have nothing to do in this matter,—but only duty. The second, which she feared to be somewhat weak,—which she almost thought would not of itself have been strong enough,—was that objection as to her condition in life which she had urged to him before. She declared to herself that it would be strong enough both for him, and for her, if they would only guide themselves by prudence. But the third,—that should be a rock to her if it were necessary; a cruel rock on which she must be shipwrecked, but against which his bark should surely not be dashed to atoms. If he would not leave her in peace without it she would tell him that she was fit to be no man's wife.

If it came to that, then she must confess her own love. She acknowledged to herself that it must be so. There could not be between them the tenderness necessary for the telling of such a tale without love, without acknowledged love. It would be better that it should not be so. If he would go and leave her to dream of him,—there might be a satisfaction even in that to sustain her during what was left to her of life. She would struggle that it should be so. But if his love were too strong, then must he know it all. She had learned from her father something of what had passed at that interview in the City, and was therefore ready to receive her lover when he came. "Marion," he said, "you expected me to come to you again?"

"Certainly I did."

"Of course I have come. I have had to go to my father, or I should have been here sooner. You know that I shall come again and again till you will say a word to me that shall comfort me."

"I knew that you would come again, because you were with father in the City."

"I went to ask his leave,—and I got it."

"It was hardly necessary for you, my lord, to take that trouble."

"But I thought it was. When a man wishes to take a girl away from her own home, and make her the mistress of his, it is customary that he shall ask for her father's permission."

"It would have been so, had you looked higher,—as you should have done."

"It was so in regard to any girl that I should wish to make my wife. Whatever respect a man can pay to any woman, that is due to my Marion." She looked at him, and with the glance of her eye went all the love of her heart. How could she say those words to him, full of reason and prudence and wisdom, if he spoke to her like this? "Answer me honestly. Do you not know that if you were the daughter of the proudest lord living in England you would not be held by me as deserving other usage than that which I think to be your privilege now?"

"I only meant that father could not but feel that you were honouring him."

"I will not speak of honour as between him and me or between me and you. With me and your father honesty was concerned. He has believed me, and has accepted me as his son-in-law. With us, Marion, with us two, all alone as we are here together, all in all to each other as I hope we are to be, only love can be brought in question. Marion, Marion!" Then he threw himself on his knees before her, and embraced her as she was sitting.

"No, my lord; no; it must not be." But now he

had both her hands in his, and was looking into her face. Now was the time to speak of duty,—and to speak with some strength, if what she might say was to have any avail.

“It shall not be so, my lord.” Then she did regain her hands, and struggled up from the sofa on to her feet. “I too, believe in your honesty. I am sure of it, as I am of my own. But you do not understand me. Think of me as though I were your sister.”

“As my sister?”

“What would you have your sister do if a man came to her then, whom she knew that she could never marry? Would you have her submit to his embrace because she knew him to be honest?”

“Not unless she loved him.”

“It would have nothing to do with it, Lord Hampstead.”

“Nothing, Marion!”

“Nothing, my lord. You will think that I am giving myself airs if I speak of my duty.”

“Your father has allowed me to come.”

“I owe him duty, no doubt. Had he bade me never to see you, I hope that that would have sufficed. But there are other duties than that,—a duty even higher than that.”

“What duty, Marion?”

“That which I owe to you. If I had promised to be your wife——”

“Do promise it.”

“Had I so promised, should I not then have been bound to think first of your happiness?”

“You would have accomplished it, at any rate.”

“Though I cannot be your wife I do not owe it you the less to think of it,—seeing all that you are willing

to do for me,—and I will think of it. I am grateful to you."

"Do you love me?"

"Let me speak, Lord Hampstead. It is not civil in you to interrupt me in that way. I am thoroughly grateful, and I will not show my gratitude by doing that which I know would ruin you."

"Do you love me?"

"Not if I loved you with all my heart,——" and she spread out her arms as though to assure herself how she did love him with all her very soul,—“would I for that be brought even to think of doing the thing that you ask me.”

"Marion!"

"No,—no. We are utterly unfit for each other." She had made her first declaration as to duty, and now she was going on as to that second profession which she intended should be, if possible, the last. "You are as high as blood and wealth and great friends can make you. I am nothing. You have called me a lady."

"If God ever made one, you are she."

"He has made me better. He has made me a woman. But others would not call me a lady. I cannot talk as they do, sit as they do, act as they do,—even think as they do. I know myself, and I will not presume to make myself the wife of such a man as you." As she said this there came a flush across her face, and a fire in her eye, and, as though conquered by her own emotion, she sank again upon the sofa.

"Do you love me, Marion?"

"I do," she said, standing once more erect upon her feet. "There shall be no shadow of a lie between us. I do love you, Lord Hampstead. I will have nothing to make me blush in my own esteem when I think of you.

How should it be other than that a girl such as I should love such a one as you when you ask me with words so sweet!"

"Then, Marion, you shall be my own."

"Oh, yes, I must now be yours,—while I am alive. You have so far conquered me." As he attempted to take her in his arms she retreated from him; but so gently that her very gentleness repressed him. "If never loving another is to be yours,—if to pray for you night and day as the dearest one of all, is to be yours,—if to remind myself every hour that all my thoughts are due to you, if to think of you so that I may console myself with knowing that one so high and so good has condescended to regard me,—if that is to be yours,—then I am yours; then shall I surely be yours while I live. But it must be only with my thoughts, only with my prayers, only with all my heart."

"Marion, Marion!" Now again he was on his knees before her, but hardly touching her.

"It is your fault, Lord Hampstead," she said, trying to smile. "All this is your doing, because you would not let a poor girl say simply what she had to say."

"Nothing of it shall be true,—except that you love me. That is all that I can remember. That I will repeat to you daily till you have put your hand in mine, and call yourself my wife."

"That I will never do," she exclaimed, once again standing. "As God hears me now I will never say it. It would be wrong,—and I will never say it." In thus protesting she put forth her little hands clenched fast, and then came again the flush across her brow, and her eyes for a moment seemed to wander, and then, failing in strength to carry her through it all, she fell back senseless on the sofa.

Lord Hampstead, finding that he alone could do nothing to aid her, was forced to ring the bell, and to give her over to the care of the woman, who did not cease to pray him to depart. "I can't do nothing, my lord, while you stand over her that way."

CHAPTER VII.

AT GORSE HALL.

HAMPSTEAD, when he was turned out into Paradise Row, walked once or twice up the street, thinking what he might best do next, regardless of the eyes at No. 10 and No. 15;—knowing that No. 11 was absent, where alone he could have found assistance had the inhabitant been there. As far as he could remember he had never seen a woman faint before. The way in which she had fallen through from his arms on to the sofa when he had tried to sustain her, had been dreadful to him; and almost more dreadful the idea that the stout old woman with whom he had left her should be more powerful than he to help her. He walked once or twice up and down, thinking what he had best now do, while Clara Demijohn was lost in wonder as to what could have happened at No. 17. It was quite intelligible to her that the lover should come in the father's absence and be entertained,—for a whole afternoon if it might be so; though she was scandalized by the audacity of the girl who had required no screen of darkness under the protection of which her lover's presence might be hidden from the inquiries of neighbours. All that, however, would have been intelligible. There is so much honour in having a lord to court one that perhaps it is well to have him seen. But why was the lord walking up and down the street with that demented air?

It was now four o'clock, and Hampstead had heard the Quaker say that he never left his office till five. It would take him nearly an hour to come down in an omnibus from the City. Nevertheless Hampstead could not go till he had spoken to Marion's father. There was the "Duchess of Edinburgh," and he could no doubt find shelter there. But to get through two hours at the "Duchess of Edinburgh" would, he thought, be beyond his powers. To consume the time with walking might be better. He started off, therefore, and tramped along the road till he came nearly to Finchley, and then back again. It was dark as he returned, and he fancied that he could wait about without being perceived. "There he is again," said Clara, who had in the mean time gone over to Mrs. Duffer. "What can it all mean?"

"It's my belief he's quarrelled with her," said Mrs. Duffer.

"Then he'd never wander about the place in that way. There's old Zachary just come round the corner. Now we shall see what he does."

"Fainted, has she?" said Zachary, as they walked together up to the house. "I never knew my girl do that before. Some of them can faint just as they please; but that's not the way with Marion." Hampstead protested that there had been no affectation on this occasion; that Marion had been so ill as to frighten him, and that, though he had gone out of the house at the woman's bidding, he had found it impossible to leave the neighbourhood till he should have learnt something as to her condition. "Thou shalt hear all I can tell thee, my friend," said the Quaker, as they entered the house together.

Hampstead was shown into the little parlour, while the Quaker went up to inquire after the state of his

daughter. "No; thou canst not well see her," said he, returning, "as she has taken herself to her bed. That she should have been excited by what passed between you is no more than natural. I cannot tell thee now when thou mayst come again; but I will write thee word from my office to-morrow." Upon this Lord Hampstead would have promised to call himself at King's Court on the next day, had not the Quaker declared himself in favour of writing rather than of speaking. The post, he said, was very punctual; and on the next evening his lordship would certainly receive tidings as to Marion.

"Of course I cannot say what we can do about Gorse Hall till I hear from Mr. Fay," said Hampstead to his sister when he reached home. "Everything must depend on Marion Fay." That his sister should have packed all her things in vain seemed to him to be nothing while Marion's health was in question; but when the Quaker's letter arrived the matter was at once settled. They would start for Gorse Hall on the following day, the Quaker's letter having been as follows:—

"MY LORD,—

"I trust I may be justified in telling thee that there is not much to ail my girl. She was up to-day, and about the house before I left her, and assured me with many protestations that I need not take any special steps for her comfort or recovery. Nor indeed could I see in her face anything which could cause me to do so. Of course I mentioned thy name to her, and it was natural that the colour should come and go over her cheeks as I did so. I think she partly told me what had passed between you two, but only in part. As to the future, when I spoke of it, she told me that there

was no need of any arrangement, as everything had been said that needed speech. But I guess that such is not thy reading of the matter; and that after what has passed between thee and me I am bound to offer to thee an opportunity of seeing her again shouldst thou wish to do so. But this must not be at once. It will certainly be better for her and, may be, for thee also that she should rest awhile before she be again asked to see thee. I would suggest, therefore, that thou shouldst leave her to her own thoughts for some weeks to come. If thou wilt write to me and name a day some time early in March I will endeavour to bring her round so far as to see thee when thou comest.

“I am, my lord,

“Thy very faithful friend,

“ZACHARY FAY.”

It cannot be said that Lord Hampstead was by any means satisfied with the arrangement which had been made for him, but he was forced to acknowledge to himself that he could not do better than accede to it. He could of course write to the Quaker, and write also to Marion; but he could not well show himself in Paradise Row before the time fixed, unless unexpected circumstances should arise. He did send three loving words to Marion—“his own, own, dearest Marion,” and sent them under cover to her father, to whom he wrote, saying that he would be guided by the Quaker’s counsels. “I will write to you on the first of March,” he said, “but I do trust that if in the mean time anything should happen,—if, for instance, Marion should be ill,—you will tell me at once as being one as much concerned in her health as you are yourself.”

He was nervous and ill-at-ease, but not thoroughly

unhappy. She had told him how dear he was to her, and he would not have been a man had he not been gratified. And there had been no word of objection raised on any matter beyond that one absurd objection as to which he thought himself entitled to demand that his wishes should be allowed to prevail. She had been very determined; how absolutely determined he was not probably himself aware. She had, however, made him understand that her conviction was very strong. But this had been as to a point on which he did not doubt that he was right, and as to which her own father was altogether on his side. After hearing the strong protestation of her affection he could not think that she would be finally obdurate when the reasons for her obduracy were so utterly valueless. But still there were vague fears about her health. Why had she fainted and fallen through his arms? Whence had come that peculiar brightness of complexion which would have charmed him had it not frightened him? A dim dread of something that was not intelligible to him pervaded him, and robbed him of a portion of the triumph which had come to him from her avowal.

* * * * *

As the days went on at Gorse Hall his triumph became stronger than his fears, and the time did not pass unpleasantly with him. Young Lord Hautboy came to hunt with him, bringing his sister Lady Amaldina, and after a few days Vivian found them. The conduct of Lady Frances in reference to George Roden was no doubt very much blamed, but the disgrace did not loom so large in the eyes of Lady Persiflage as in those of her sister the Marchioness. Amaldina was, therefore, suffered to amuse herself, even as the guest of her wicked friend;—even though the host were himself nearly

equally wicked. It suited young Hautboy very well to have free stables for his horses, and occasionally an extra mount when his own two steeds were insufficient for the necessary amount of hunting to be performed. Vivian, who had the liberal allowance of a private secretary to a Cabinet Minister to fall back upon, had three horses of his own. So that among them they got a great deal of hunting,—in which Lady Amaldina would have taken a conspicuous part had not Lord Llwdytlw entertained strong opinions as to the expediency of ladies riding to hounds. “He is so absurdly strict, you know,” she said to Lady Frances.

“I think he is quite right,” said the other. “I don’t believe in girls trying to do all the things that men do.”

“But what is the difference in jumping just over a hedge or two? I call it downright tyranny. Would you do anything Mr. Roden told you?”

“Anything on earth,—except jump over the hedges. But our temptations are not likely to be in that way.”

“I think it very hard because I almost never see Llwdytlw.”

“But you will when you are married.”

“I don’t believe I shall;—unless I go and look at him from behind the grating in the House of Commons. You know we have settled upon August.”

“I had not heard it.”

“Oh yes. I nailed him at last. But then I had to get David. You don’t know David?”

“No special modern David.”

“Our David is not very modern. He is Lord David Powell, and my brother that is to be. I had to persuade him to do something instead of his brother, and I had to swear that we couldn’t ever be married unless he would consent. I suppose Mr. Roden could get married

any day he pleased." Nevertheless Lady Amaldina was better than nobody to make the hours pass when the men are away hunting.

But at last there came a grand day, on which the man of business was to come out hunting himself. Lord Llwdythlw had come into the neighbourhood, and was determined to have a day's pleasure. Gorse Hall was full, and Hautboy, though his sister was very eager in beseeching him, refused to give way to his future magnificent brother-in-law. "Do him all the good in the world," said Hautboy, "to put up at the pot-house. He'll find out all about whiskey and beer and gin, and know exactly how many beds the landlady makes up." Lord Llwdythlw, therefore, slept at a neighbouring hotel, and no doubt did turn his spare moments to some profit.

Lord Llwdythlw was a man who had always horses, though he very rarely hunted; who had guns, though he never fired them; and fishing-rods, though nobody knew where they were. He kept up a great establishment, regretting nothing in regard to it except the necessity of being sometimes present at the festivities for which it was used. On the present occasion he had been enticed into Northamptonshire no doubt with the purpose of laying some first bricks, or opening some completed institution, or eating some dinner,—on any one of which occasions he would be able to tell the neighbours something as to the constitution of their country. Then the presence of his lady-love seemed to make this a fitting occasion for, perhaps, the one day's sport of the year. He came to Gorse Hall to breakfast, and then rode to the meet along with the open carriage in which the two ladies were sitting. "Llwdythlw," said his lady-love, "I do hope you mean to ride."

"Being on horseback, Amy, I shall have no other alternative."

Lady Amaldina turned round to her friend, as though to ask whether she had ever seen such an absurd creature in her life. "You know what I mean by riding, Llwdydlw," she said.

"I suppose I do. You want me to break my neck."

"Oh, heavens! Indeed I don't."

"Or, perhaps, only to see me in a ditch."

"I can't have that pleasure," she said, "because you won't allow me to hunt."

"I have taken upon myself no such liberty as even to ask you not to do so. I have only suggested that tumbling into ditches, however salutary it may be for middle-aged gentlemen like myself, is not a becoming amusement for young ladies."

"Llwdydlw," said Hautboy, coming up to his future brother-in-law, "that's a tidy animal of yours."

"I don't quite know what tidy means as applied to a horse, my boy; but if it's complimentary, I am much obliged to you."

"It means that I should like to have the riding of him for the rest of the season."

"But what shall I do for myself if you take my tidy horse?"

"You'll be up in Parliament, or down at Quarter Sessions, or doing your duty somewhere like a Briton."

"I hope I may do my duty not the less because I intend to keep the tidy horse myself. When I am quite sure that I shall not want him any more, then I'll let you know."

There was the usual trotting about from covert to covert, and the usual absence of foxes. The misery of sportsmen on these days is sometimes so great that we

wonder that any man, having experienced the bitterness of hunting disappointment, should ever go out again. On such occasions the huntsman is declared among private friends to be of no use whatever. The master is an absolute muff. All honour as to preserving has been banished from the country. The gamekeepers destroy the foxes. The owners of coverts encourage them. "Things have come to such a pass," says Walker to Watson, "that I mean to give it up. There's no good keeping horses for this sort of thing." All this is very sad, and the only consolation comes from the evident delight of those who take pleasure in trotting about without having to incur the labour and peril of riding to hounds.

At two o'clock on this day the ladies went home, having been driven about as long as the coachmen had thought it good for their horses. The men of course went on, knowing that they could not in honour liberate themselves from the toil of the day till the last covert shall have been drawn at half-past three o'clock. It is certainly true as to hunting that there are so many hours in which the spirit is vexed by a sense of failure, that the joy when it does come should be very great to compensate the evils endured. It is not simply that foxes will not dwell in every spinney, or break as soon as found, or always run when they do break. These are the minor pangs. But when the fox is found, and will break, and does run, when the scent suffices, and the hounds do their duty, when the best country which the Shires afford is open to you, when your best horse is under you, when your nerves are even somewhat above the usual mark,—even then there is so much of failure! You are on the wrong side of the wood, and getting a bad start are never with them for a yard; or your horse,

good as he is, won't have that bit of water; or you lose your stirrup-leather, or your way; or you don't see the hounds turn, and you go astray with others as blind as yourself; or, perhaps, when there comes the run of the season, on that very day you have taken a liberty with your chosen employment, and have lain in bed. Look back upon your hunting lives, brother sportsmen, and think how few and how far between the perfect days have been.

In spite of all that was gone this was one of those perfect days to those who had the pleasure afterwards of remembering it. "Taking it all in all, I think that Lord Llwdydlw had the best of it from first to last," said Vivian, when they were again talking of it in the drawing-room after they had come in from their wine.

"To think that you should be such a hero!" said Lady Amaldina, much gratified. "I didn't believe you would take so much trouble about such a thing."

"It was what Hautboy called the tidiness of the horse."

"By George, yes; I wish you'd lend him to me. I got my brute in between two rails, and it took me half-an-hour to smash a way through. I never saw anything of it after that." Poor Hautboy almost cried as he gave this account of his own misfortune.

"You were the only fellow I saw try them after Crasher," said Vivian. "Crasher came on his head, and I should think he must be there still. I don't know where Hampstead got through."

"I never know where I've been," said Hampstead, who had, in truth, led the way over the double rails which had confounded Crasher and had so perplexed Hautboy. But when a man is too forward to be seen, he is always supposed to be somewhere behind.

Then there was an opinion expressed by Walker that Tolleyboy, the huntsman, had on that special occasion stuck very well to his hounds, to which Watson gave his cordial assent. Walker and Watson had both been asked to dinner, and during the day had been heard to express to each other all that adverse criticism as to the affairs of the hunt in general which appeared a few lines back. Walker and Watson were very good fellows, popular in the hunt, and of all men the most unlikely to give it up.

When that run was talked about afterwards, as it often was, it was always admitted that Lord Llwdythlw had been the hero of the day. But no one ever heard him talk of it. Such a trifle was altogether beneath his notice.

CHAPTER VIII.

POOR WALKER.

THAT famous run took place towards the end of February, at which time Hampstead was counting all the hours till he should again be allowed to show himself in Paradise Row. He had in the mean time written one little letter to the Quaker's daughter;—

“DEAREST MARION,—I only write because I cannot keep myself quiet without telling you how well I love you. Pray do not believe that because I am away I think of you less. I am to see you, I hope, on Monday, the 2nd of March. If you would write me but one word to say that you will be glad to see me!

“Always your own,

“H.”

She showed this to her father, and the sly old Quaker told her that it would not be courteous in her not to send some word of reply. As the young lord, he said, had been permitted by him, her father, to pay his addresses to her, so much was due to him. Why should his girl lose this grand match? Why should his daughter not become a happy and a glorious wife, seeing that her beauty and her grace had entirely won this young lord's heart? "MY LORD," she wrote back to him,—“I shall be happy to see you when you come, whatever day may suit you. But, alas! I can only say what I have said.—Yet I am thine, MARION.” She had intended not to be tender, and yet she had thought herself bound to tell him that all that she had said before was true.

It was after this that Lord Llwdythlw distinguished himself, so much so that Walker and Watson did nothing but talk about him all the next day. “It's those quiet fellows that make the best finish after all!” said Walker, who had managed to get altogether to the bottom of his horse during the run, and had hardly seen the end of it quite as a man wishes to see it.

The day but one after this, the last Friday in February, was to be the last of Hampstead's hunting, at any rate until after his proposed visit to Holloway. He, and Lady Frances with him, intended to return to London on the next day, and then, as far as he was concerned, the future loomed before him as a great doubt. Had Marion been the highest lady in the land, and had he from his position and rank been hardly entitled to ask for her love, he could not have been more anxious, more thoughtful, or occasionally more down-hearted. But this latter feeling would give way to joy when he remembered the words with which she had declared her love. No assurance could have been more perfect, or

more devoted. She had coyed him nothing as far as words are concerned, and he never for a moment doubted but that her full words had come from a full heart. "But alas! I can only say what I have said." That of course had been intended to remove all hope. But if she loved him as she said she did, would he not be able to teach her that everything should be made to give way to love? It was thus that his mind was filled, as day after day he prepared himself for his hunting, and day after day did his best in keeping to the hounds.

Then came that last day in February as to which all those around him expressed themselves to be full of hope. Gimberley Green was certainly the most popular meet in the country, and at Gimberley Green the hounds were to meet on this occasion. It was known that men were coming from the Pytchley and the Cottesmore, so that everybody was supposed to be anxious to do his best. Hautboy was very much on the alert, and had succeeded in borrowing for the occasion Hampstead's best horse. Even Vivian, who was not given to much outward enthusiasm, had had consultations with his groom as to which of two he had better ride first. Sometimes there does come a day on which rivalry seems to be especially keen, when a sense of striving to excel and going ahead of others seems to instigate minds which are not always ambitious. Watson and Walker were on this occasion very much exercised, and had in the sweet confidences of close friendship agreed with themselves that certain heroes who were coming from one of the neighbouring hunts should not be allowed to carry off the honours of the day.

On this occasion they both breakfasted at Gorse Hall, which was not uncommon with them, as the hotel,—or pot-house, as Hautboy called it,—was hardly more than

a hundred yards distant. Walker was peculiarly exuberant, and had not been long in the house before he confided to Hautboy in a whisper their joint intention that "those fellows" were not to be allowed to have it all their own way. "Suppose you don't find after all, Mr. Walker," said Lady Amaldina, as the gentlemen got up from breakfast, and loaded themselves with sandwiches, cigar-cases, and sherry-flasks.

"I won't believe anything so horrible," said Walker.

"I should cut the concern," said Watson, "and take to staggings in Surrey." This was supposed to be the bitterest piece of satire that could be uttered in regard to the halcyon country in which their operations were carried on.

"Tolleyboy will see to that," said Walker. "We haven't had a blank yet, and I don't think he'll disgrace himself on such a day as this." Then they all started, in great glee, on their hacks, their hunters having been already sent on to Gimberley Green.

The main part of the story of that day's sport, as far as we're concerned with it, got itself told so early in the day that readers need not be kept long waiting for the details. Tolleyboy soon relieved these impetuous riders from all dangers as to a blank. At the first covert drawn a fox was found immediately, and without any of those delays, so perplexing to some and so comforting to others, made away for some distant home of his own. It is, perhaps, on such occasions as these that riders are subjected to the worst perils of the hunting field. There comes a sudden rush, when men have not cooled themselves down by the process of riding here and there and going through the usual preliminary prefaces to a run. They are collected in crowds, and the horses are more impatient even than their riders. No one on that occa-

sion could have been more impatient than Walker,—unless it was the steed upon which Walker was mounted. There was a crowd of men standing in a lane at the corner of the covert,—of men who had only that moment reached the spot,—when at about thirty yards from them a fox crossed the lane, and two or three leading hounds close at his brush. One or two of the strangers from the enemy's country occupied a position close to, or rather in the very entrance of, a little hunting gate which led out of the lane into the field opposite. Between the lane and the field there was a fence which was not "rideable!" As is the custom with lanes, the roadway had been so cut down that there was a bank altogether precipitous about three feet high, and on that a hedge of trees and stakes and roots which had also been cut almost into the consistency of a wall. The gate was the only place,—into which these enemies had thrust themselves, and in the possession of which they did not choose to hurry themselves, asserting as they kept their places that it would be well to give the fox a minute. The assertion in the interests of hunting might have been true. A sportsman who could at such a moment have kept his blood perfectly cool, might have remembered his duties well enough to have abstained from pressing into the field in order that the fox might have his fair chance. Hampstead, however, who was next to the enemies, was not that cool hero, and bade the strangers move on, not failing to thrust his horse against their horses. Next to him, and a little to the left, was the unfortunate Walker. To his patriotic spirit it was intolerable that any stranger should be in that field before one of their own hunt. What he himself attempted, what he wished to do, or whether any clear intention was formed in his mind, no one ever knew. But to the

astonishment of all who saw it the horse got himself half-turned round towards the fence, and attempted to take it in a stand. The eager animal did get himself up amidst the thick wood on the top of the bank, and then fell headlong over, having entangled his feet among the boughs. Had his rider sat loosely he would probably have got clear of his horse. But as it was they came down together, and unfortunately the horse was uppermost. Just as it happened Lord Hampstead made his way through the gate, and was the first who dismounted to give assistance to his friend. In two or three minutes there was a crowd round, with a doctor in the midst of it, and a rumour was going about that the man had been killed. In the mean time the enemies were riding well to the hounds, with Tolleyboy but a few yards behind them, Tolleyboy having judiciously remembered a spot at which he could make his way out of the covert into field without either passing through the gate or over the fence.

The reader may as well know at once that Walker was not killed. He was not killed, though he was so crushed and mauled with broken ribs and collar-bone, so knocked out of breath and stunned and mangled and squeezed, so pummelled and pounded and generally misused, that he did not come to himself for many hours, and could never after remember anything of that day's performances after eating his breakfast at Gorse Hall. It was a week before tidings went through the Shires that he was likely to live at all, and even then it was asserted that he had been so altogether smashed that he would never again use any of his limbs. On the morning after the hunt his widowed mother and only sister were down with him at the hotel, and there they remained till they were able to carry him away to his

own house. "Won't I?" was almost the first intelligible word he said when his mother suggested to him, her only son, that now at least he would promise to abandon that desperate amusement, and would never go hunting any more. It may be said in praise of British surgery generally that Walker was out again on the first of the following November.

But Walker with his misfortunes and his heroism and his recovery would have been nothing to us had it been known from the first to all the field that Walker had been the victim. The accident happened between eleven and twelve,—probably not much before twelve. But the tidings of it were sent up by telegraph from some neighbouring station to London in time to be inserted in one of the afternoon newspapers of that day; and the tidings as sent informed the public that Lord Hampstead while hunting that morning had fallen with his horse at the corner of Gimberley Green, that the animal had fallen on him,—and that he had been crushed to death. Had the false information been given in regard to Walker it might probably have excited so little attention that the world would have known nothing about it till it learned that the poor fellow had not been killed. But, having been given as to a young nobleman, everybody had heard of it before dinner-time that evening. Lord Persiflage knew it in the House of Lords, and Lord Llwdythlw had heard it in the House of Commons. There was not a club which had not declared poor Hampstead to be an excellent fellow, although he was a little mad. The Montressors had already congratulated themselves on the good fortune of little Lord Frederic; and the speedy death of the Marquis was prophesied, as men and women were quite sure that he would not be able in his present condition to bear the loss of his

eldest son. The news was telegraphed down to Trafford Park by the family lawyer,—with an intimation, however, that, as the accident had been so recent, no absolute credence should yet be given as to its fatal result. “Bad fall probably,” said the lawyer in his telegram, “but I don’t believe the rest. Will send again when I hear the truth.” At nine o’clock that evening the truth was known in London, and before midnight the poor Marquis had been relieved from his terrible affliction. But for three hours it had been supposed at Trafford Park that Lord Frederic had become the heir to his father’s title and his father’s property.

Close inquiry was afterwards made as to the person by whom this false intelligence had been sent to the newspaper, but nothing certain was ever asserted respecting it. That a general rumour had prevailed for a time among many who were out that Lord Hampstead had been the victim, was found to have been the case. He had been congratulated by scores of men who had heard that he had fallen. When Tolleyboy was breaking up the fox, and wondering why so few men had ridden through the hunt with him, he was told that Lord Hampstead had been killed, and had dropped his bloody knife out of his hands. But no one would own as to having sent the telegram. Suspicion attached itself to an attorney from Kettering who had been seen in the early part of the day, but it could not be traced home to him. Official inquiry was made; but as it was not known who sent the message, or to what address, or from what post town, or even the wording of the message, official information was not forthcoming. It is probable that Sir Boreas at the Post Office did not think it proper to tell everybody all that he knew. It was admitted that a great injury had been done to the poor Marquis, but it

was argued on the other side that the injury had been quickly removed.

There had, however, been three or four hours at Trafford Park, during which feelings had been excited which afterwards gave rise to bitter disappointment. The message had come to Mr. Greenwood, of whose estrangement from the family the London solicitor had not been as yet made aware. He had been forced to send the tidings into the sick man's room by Harris, the butler, but he had himself carried it up to the Marchioness. "I am obliged to come," he said, as though apologizing when she looked at him with angry eyes because of his intrusion. "There has been an accident." He was standing, as he always stood, with his hands hanging down by his side. But there was a painful look in his eyes more than she had usually read there.

"What accident—what accident, Mr. Greenwood? Why do you not tell me?" Her heart ran away at once to the little beds in which her darlings were already lying in the next room.

"It is a telegram from London."

From London—a telegram! Then her boys were safe. "Why do you not tell me instead of standing there?"

"Lord Hampstead——"

"Lord Hampstead! What has he done? Is he married?"

"He will never be married." Then she shook in every limb, and clenched her hands, and stood with open mouth, not daring to question him. "He has had a fall, Lady Kingsbury."

"A fall!"

"The horse has crushed him."

"Crushed him!"

"I used to say it would be so, you know. And now it has come to pass."

"Is he——?"

"Dead? Yes, Lady Kingsbury, he is—dead." Then he gave her the telegram to read. She struggled to read it, but the words were too vague; or her eyes too dim. "Harris has gone in with the tidings. I had better read the telegram, I suppose, but I thought you'd like to see it. I told you how it would be, Lady Kingsbury; and now it has come to pass." He stood standing a minute or two longer, but as she sat hiding her face, and unable to speak, he left the room without absolutely asking her to thank him for his news.

As soon as he was gone she crept slowly into the room in which her three boys were sleeping. A door from her own chamber opened into it, and then another into that in which one of the nurses slept. She leaned over them and kissed them all; but she knelt at that on which Lord Frederic lay, and woke him with her warm embraces. "Oh, mamma, don't," said the boy. Then he shook himself, and sat up in his bed. "Mamma, when is Jack coming?" he said. Let her train them as she would, they would always ask for Jack. "Go to sleep, my darling, my darling, my darling!" she said, kissing him again and again. "Trafford," she said, whispering to herself, as she went back to her own room, trying the sound of the title he would have to use. It had been all arranged in her own mind how it was to be, if such a thing should happen.

"Go down," she said to her maid soon afterwards, "and ask Mrs. Crawley whether his Lordship would wish to see me." Mrs. Crawley was the nurse. But the maid brought back word that "My Lord" did not wish to see "My Lady." For three hours he lay stupefied in his sor-

row; and for three hours she sat alone, almost in the dark. We may doubt whether it was all triumph. Her darling had got what she believed to be his due; but the memory that she had longed for it,—almost prayed for it,—must have dulled her joy.

There was no such regret with Mr. Greenwood. It seemed to him that Fortune, Fate, Providence, or what not, had only done its duty. He believed that he had in truth foreseen and foretold the death of the pernicious young man. But would the young man's death be now of any service to him? Was it not too late? Had they not all quarrelled with him? Nevertheless he had been avenged.

So it was at Trafford Park for three hours. Then there came a postboy galloping on horseback, and the truth was known. Lady Kingsbury went again to her children, but this time she did not kiss them. A gleam of glory had come there and had passed away;—but yet there was something of relief.

Why had he allowed himself to be so cowed on that morning? That was Mr. Greenwood's thought.

The poor Marquis fell into a slumber almost immediately, and on the next morning had almost forgotten that the first telegram had come.

CHAPTER IX.

FALSE TIDINGS.

BUT there was another household which the false tidings of Lord Hampstead's death reached that same night. The feelings excited at Trafford had been very keen,—parental agony, maternal hope, disappointment, and revenge; but in that other household there was suffering quite as great. Mr. Fay himself did not devote

much time during the day either to the morning or the evening newspapers. Had he been alone at Messrs. Pogson and Littlebird's he would have heard nothing of the false tidings. But sitting in his inner room, Mr. Pogson read the third edition of the *Evening Advertiser*, and saw the statement, given with many details. "We," said the statement, "have sent over to the office of our contemporary, and have corroborated the facts." Then the story was repeated. Pushing his way through a gate at Gimberley Green, Lord Hampstead's horse had tumbled down, and all the field had ridden over him. He had been picked up dead, and his body had been carried home to Gorse Hall. Now Lord Hampstead's name had become familiar in King's Court. Tribbledale had told how the young lord had become enamoured of Zachary Fay's daughter, and was ready to marry her at a moment's notice. The tale had been repeated to old Littlebird by young Littlebird, and at last even to Mr. Pogson himself. There had been, of course, much doubt in King's Court as to the very improbable story. But some inquiries had been made, and there was now a general belief in its truth. When Mr. Pogson read the account of the sad tragedy he paused a moment to think what he would do, then opened his door and called for Zachary Fay. They who had known the Quaker long always called him Zachary, or Friend Zachary, or Zachary Fay. "My friend," said Mr. Pogson, "have you read this yet?" and he handed him the paper.

"I never have much time for the newspaper till I get home at night," said the clerk, taking the sheet that was offered him.

"You had better read it, perhaps, as I have heard your name mentioned, I know not how properly, with that of the young lord. Then the Quaker, bringing his

spectacles down from his forehead over his eyes, slowly read the paragraph. As he did so Mr. Pogson looked at him carefully. But the Quaker showed very little emotion by his face. "Does it concern you, Zachary?"

"I know the young man, Mr. Pogson. Though he be much out of my own rank, circumstances have brought him to my notice. I shall be grieved if this be true. With thy permission, Mr. Pogson, I will lock up my desk and return home at once." To this Mr. Pogson of course assented, recommending the Quaker to put the newspaper into his pocket.

Zachary Fay, as he walked to the spot where he was wont to find the omnibus, considered much as to what he might best do when he reached home. Should he tell the sad tidings to his girl, or should he leave her to hear it when further time should have confirmed the truth. To Zachary himself it seemed too probable that it should be true. Hunting to him, in his absolute ignorance of what hunting meant, seemed to be an occupation so full of danger that the wonder was that the hunting world had not already been exterminated. And then there was present to him a feeling, as there is to many of us, that the grand thing which Fortune seemed to offer him was too good to be true. It could hardly be that he should live to see his daughter the mother of a future British peer! He had tried to school himself not to wish it, telling himself that such wishes were vain, and such longings wicked; he had said much to himself as to the dangers of rank and titles and wealth for those who were not born to them. He had said something also of that family tragedy which had robbed his own life of most of its joys, and which seemed to have laid so heavy a burden on his girl's spirit. Going backwards and forwards morning and evening to

his work, he had endeavoured to make his own heart acknowledge that the marriage was not desirable; but he had failed;—and had endeavoured to reconcile the failure to his conscience by telling himself falsely that he as a father had been anxious only for the welfare of his child. Now he felt the blow terribly on her account, feeling sure that his girl's heart had been given to the young man; but he felt it also on his own. It might be, nevertheless, that the report would prove untrue. Had the matter been one in which he was not himself so deeply interested, he would certainly have believed it to be untrue, he being a man by his nature not prone to easy belief. It would, however, be wiser, he said to himself as he left the omnibus at the "Duchess of Edinburgh," to say nothing as yet to Marion. Then he put the paper carefully into his breast coat pocket, and considered how he might best hide his feelings as to the sad news. But all this was in vain. The story had already found its way down to Paradise Row. Mrs. Demijohn was as greedy of news as her neighbours, and would generally send round the corner for a halfpenny evening journal. On this occasion she did so, and within two minutes of the time in which the paper had been put into her hands exclaimed to her niece almost with ecstasy, "Clara, what do you think? That young lord who comes here to see Marion Fay has gone and got himself killed out hunting."

"Lord Hampstead!" shouted Clara. "Got himself killed! Laws, aunt, I can't believe it!" In her tone, also, there was something almost of exultation. The glory that had been supposed to be awaiting Marion Fay was almost too much for the endurance of any neighbour. Since it had become an ascertained fact that Lord Hampstead had admired the girl, Marion's popularity in

the Row had certainly decreased. Mrs. Duffer believed her no longer to be handsome; Clara had always thought her to be pert; Mrs. Demijohn had expressed her opinion that the man was an idiot; and the landlady at the "Duchess of Edinburgh" had wittily asserted that "young marquises were not to be caught with chaff." There was no doubt a sense of relief in Clara Demijohn's mind when she heard that this special young marquis had been trampled to death in the hunting field, and carried home a corpse.

"I must go and tell the poor girl," said Clara immediately.

"Leave it alone," said the old woman. "There will be plenty to tell her, let alone you." But such occasions occur so rarely that it does not do not to take advantage of them. In ordinary life events are so unfrequent, and when they do arrive they give such a flavour of salt to hours which are generally tedious, that sudden misfortunes come as godsend,--almost even when they happen to ourselves. Even a funeral gives a tasteful break to the monotony of our usual occupations, and small-pox in the next street is a gratifying excitement. Clara soon got possession of the newspaper, and with it in her hand ran across the street to No. 17. Miss Fay was at home, and in a minute or two came down to Miss Demijohn in the parlour.

It was only during the minute or two that Clara began to think how she should break the tidings to her friend, or in any way to realize the fact that the "tidings" would require breaking. She had rushed across the street with the important paper in her hand, proud of the fact that she had something great to tell. But during that minute or two it did occur to her that a choice of words was needed for such an occasion. "Oh, Miss Fay," she said, "have you heard?"

"Heard what?" asked Marion.

"I do not know how to tell you, it is so terrible! I have only just seen it in the newspaper, and have thought it best to run over and let you know."

"Has anything happened to my father!" asked the girl.

"It isn't your father. This is almost more dreadful, because he is so young." Then that bright pink hue spread itself over Marion's face; but she stood speechless with her features almost hardened by the resolution which she had already formed within her not to betray the feelings of her heart before this other girl. The news, let it be what it might, must be of him! There was no one else "so young," of whom it was probable that this young woman would speak to her after this fashion. She stood silent, motionless, conveying nothing of her feelings by her face,—unless one might have read something from the deep flush of her complexion. "I don't know how to say it," said Clara Demijohn. "There; you had better take the paper and read for yourself. It's in the last column but one near the bottom. 'Fatal Accident in the Field!' You'll see it."

Marion took the paper, and read the words through without faltering or moving a limb. Why would not the cruel young woman go and leave her to her sorrow? Why did she stand there looking at her, as though desirous to probe to the bottom the sad secret of her bosom? She kept her eyes still fixed upon the paper, not knowing where else to turn them,—for she would not look into her tormentor's face for pity. "Ain't it sad?" said Clara Demijohn.

Then there came a deep sigh. "Sad," she said, repeating the word; "sad! Yes, it's sad. I think, if you don't mind, I'll ask you to leave me now. Oh, yes; there's the newspaper."

"Perhaps you'd like to keep it for your father." Here Marion shook her head. "Then I'll take it back to aunt. She's hardly looked at it yet. When she came to the paragraph, of course, she read it out; and I wouldn't let her have any peace till she gave it me to bring over."

"I wish you'd leave me," said Marion Fay.

Then with a look of mingled surprise and anger she left the room, and returned across the street to No. 10. "She doesn't seem to me to care a straw about it," said the niece to her aunt; "but she got up just as highty tighty as usual and asked me to go away."

When the Quaker came to the door, and opened it with his latch-key, Marion was in the passage ready to receive him. Till she had heard the sound of the lock she had not moved from the room, hardly from the position, in which the other girl had left her. She had sunk into a chair which had been ready for her, and there she had remained thinking over it. "Father," she said, laying her hand upon his arm as she went to meet him, and looking up into his face;—"father?"

"My child!"

"Have you heard any tidings in the City?"

"Have you heard any, Marion?"

"Is it true then?" she said, seizing both his arms as though to support her.

"Who knows? Who can say that it be true till further tidings shall come? Come in, Marion. It is not well that we should discuss it here."

"Is it true? Oh, father;—oh, father; it will kill me."

"Nay, Marion, not that. After all, the lad was little more than a stranger to thee."

"A stranger?"

"How many weeks is it since first thou saw'st him?"

And how often? But two or three times. I am sorry for him;—if it be true; if it be true! I liked him well.”

“But I have loved him.”

“Nay, Marion, nay; thou shouldst moderate thyself.”

“I will not moderate myself.” Then she disengaged herself from his arm. “I loved him,—with all my heart, and all my strength; nay, with my whole soul. If it be so as that paper says, then I must die too. Oh, father, is it true, think you?”

He paused a while before he answered, examining himself what it might be best that he should say as to her welfare. As for himself, he hardly knew what he believed. These papers were always in search of paragraphs, and would put in the false and true alike,—the false perhaps the sooner, so as to please the taste of their readers. But if it were true, then how bad would it be to give her false hopes! “There need be no ground to despair,” he said, “till we shall hear again in the morning.”

“I know he is dead.”

“Not so, Marion. Thou canst know nothing. If thou wilt bear thyself like a strong-hearted girl, as thou art, I will do this for thee. I will go across to the young lord’s house at Hendon at once, and inquire there as to his safety. They will surely know if aught of ill has happened to their master.”

So it was done. The poor old man, after his long day’s labour, without waiting for his evening meal, taking only a crust with him in his pocket, got into a cab on that cold November evening, and had himself driven by suburban streets and lanes to Hendon Hall. Here the servants were much surprised and startled by the inquiries made. They had heard nothing. Lord Hampstead and his sister were expected home on the following

day. Dinner was to be prepared for them, and fires had already been lighted in the rooms. "Dead!" "Killed out hunting!" "Trodden to death in the field!" Not a word of it had reached Hendon Hall. Nevertheless the housekeeper, when the paragraph was shown to her, believed every word of it. And the servants believed it. Thus the poor Quaker returned home with but very little comfort.

Marion's condition during that night was very sad, though she struggled to bear up against her sorrow in compliance with her father's instructions. There was almost nothing said as she sat by him while he ate his supper. On the next morning, too, she rose to give him his breakfast, having fallen asleep through weariness a hundred times during the night, to wake again within a minute or two to the full sense of her sorrow. "Shall I know soon?" she said as he left the house.

"Surely some one will know," he said; "and I will send thee word."

But as he left the house the real facts had already been made known at the "Duchess of Edinburgh." One of the morning papers had a full, circumstantial, and fairly true account of the whole matter. "It was not his lordship at all," said the good-natured landlady, coming out to him as he passed the door.

"Not Lord Hampstead?"

"Not at all."

"He was not killed?"

"It wasn't him as was hurt, Mr. Fay. It was another of them young men—one Mr. Walker; only son of Watson, Walker, and Warren. And whether he be dead or alive nobody knows; but they do say there wasn't a whole bone left in his body. It's all here, and I was a-going to bring it you. I suppose Miss Fay did take it badly?"

"I knew the young man," said the Quaker, hurrying back to his own house with the paper,—anxious if possible not to declare to the neighbourhood that the young lord was in truth a suitor for his daughter's hand. "And I thank thee, Mrs. Grimley, for thy care. The suddenness of it all frightened my poor girl."

"That'll comfort her up," said Mrs. Grimley cheerily. "From all we hear, Mr. Fay, she do have reason to be anxious for this young lord. I hope he'll be spared to her, Mr. Fay, and show himself a true man."

Then the Quaker returned with his news, — which was accepted by him and by them all as trustworthy. "Now my girl will be happy again?"

"Yes, father."

"But my child has told the truth to her old father at last."

"Had I told you any untruth?"

"No, indeed, Marion."

"I said that I am not fit to be his wife, and I am not. Nothing is changed in all that. But when I heard that he was——. But, father, we will not talk of it now. How good you have been to me, I shall never forget,—and how tender!"

"Who should be soft-hearted if not a father?"

"They are not all like you. But you have been always good and gentle to your girl. How good and how gentle we cannot always see;—can we? But I have seen it now, father."

As he went into the City, about an hour after his proper time, he allowed his heart to rejoice at the future prospects of his girl. He did now believe that there would be a marriage between her and her noble lover. She had declared her love to him,—to him, her father, and after that she would surely do as they would have

her. Something had reached even his ears of the coyness of girls, and it was not displeasing to him that his girl had not been at once ready to give herself with her easy promise to her lover. How strong she had looked, even in the midst of her sufferings, on the previous evening! That she should be weaker this morning, less able to restrain her tears, more prone to tremble as he spoke to her, was but natural. The shock of the grief will often come after the sorrow is over. He knew that, and told himself that there need be nothing,—need not at least be much,—to fear.

But it was not so with Marion as she lay all the morning convulsed almost with the violence of her emotions. Her own weakness was palpable to herself, as she struggled to regain her breath, struggled to repress her sobs, struggled to move about the house, and be as might be any other girl. “Better just lie thee down till thy father return, and leave me to bustle through the work,” said the old Quaker woman who had lived with them through all their troubles. Then Marion yielded, and laid herself on the bed till the hour had come in which her father might be expected.

CHAPTER X.

NEVER, NEVER, TO COME AGAIN.

THE trouble to Hampstead occasioned by the accident was considerable, as was also for the first twenty-four hours his anxiety and that of his sister as to the young man’s fate. He got back to Gorse Hall early in the day, as there was no more hunting after the killing of that first fox. There had been a consultation as to the young man, and it had been held to be best to have him taken to the inn at which he had been living, as

there would be room there for any of his friends who might come to look after him. But during the whole of that day inquiries were made at Gorse Hall after Lord Hampstead himself, so general had been the belief that he was the victim. From all the towns around, from Peterborough, Oundle, Stilton, and Thrapstone, there came mounted messengers, with expressions of hope and condolence as to the young lord's broken bones.

And then the condition of their poor neighbour was so critical that they found it to be impossible to leave Gorse Hall on the next day, as they had intended. He had become intimate with them, and had breakfasted at Gorse Hall on that very morning. In one way Hampstead felt that he was responsible, as, had he not been in the way, poor Walker's horse would have been next to the gate, and would not have attempted the impossible jump. They were compelled to put off the journey till the Monday. "Will go by the 9.30 train," said Hampstead in his telegram, who, in spite of poor Walker's mangled body, was still determined to see Marion on that day. On the Saturday morning it became known to him and his sister that the false report had been in the London newspapers, and then they had found themselves compelled to send telegrams to every one who knew them, to the Marquis, and to the lawyer in London, to Mr. Roberts, and to the housekeeper at Hendon Hall. Telegrams were also sent by Lady Amaldina to Lady Persiflage, and especially to Lord Llwdythlw. Vivian sent others to the Civil Service generally. Hautboy was very eager to let everybody know the truth at the Pandemonium. Never before had so many telegrams been sent from the little office at Gimberley. But there was one for which Hampstead demanded priority, writing

it himself, and himself giving it into the hands of the despatching young lady, the daughter of the Gimberley grocer, who no doubt understood the occasion perfectly.

“To Marion Fay, 17, Paradise Row, Holloway.

“It was not I who was hurt. Shall be at No. 17 by three on Monday.”

“I wonder whether they heard it down at Trafford,” said Lady Amaldina to Lady Frances. On this subject they were informed before the day was over, as a long message came from Mr. Roberts in compliance with the instructions from the Marquis. “Because if they did what a terrible disappointment my aunt will have to bear.”

“Do not say anything so horrible,” said Lady Frances.

“I always look upon Aunt Clara as though she were not quite in her right senses about her own children. She thinks a great injury is done her because her son is not the heir. Now for a moment she will have believed that it was so.” This, however, was a view of the matter which Lady Frances found herself unable to discuss.

“He’s going to get well after all,” said Hautboy that evening, just before dinner. He had been running over to the inn every hour to ask after the condition of poor Walker. At first the tidings had been gloomy enough. The doctor had only been able to say that he needn’t die because of his broken bones. Then late in the afternoon there arrived a surgeon from London who gave something of a stronger hope. The young man’s consciousness had come back to him, and he had expressed an appreciation for brandy and water. It was this fact which had seemed so promising to young Lord Hautboy.

On the Saturday there came Mrs. Walker and Miss Walker, and before the Sunday evening it was told how the patient had signified his intention of hunting again on the first possible opportunity. "I always knew he was a brick," said Hautboy, as he repeated the story, "because he always would ride at everything."

"I don't think he'll ever ride again at the fence just out of Gimberley Wood," said Lord Hampstead. They were all able to start on the Monday morning without serious concern, as the accounts from the injured man's bed-room were still satisfactory. That he had broken three ribs, a collar-bone, and an arm seemed to be accounted as nothing. Nor was there much made of the scalp wound on his head, which had come from a kick the horse gave him in the struggle. As his brains were still there, that did not much matter. His cheek had been cut open by a stake on which he fell, but the scar, it was thought, would only add to his glories. It was the pressure of the horse which had fallen across his body which the doctors feared. But Hautboy very rightly argued that there couldn't be much danger, seeing that he had recovered his taste for brandy and water. "If it wasn't for that," said Hautboy, "I don't think I'd have gone away and left him."

Lord Hampstead found, when he reached home on the Monday morning, that his troubles were not yet over. The housekeeper came out and wept, almost with her arms round his neck. The groom, and the footman, and the gardener, even the cowboy himself, flocked about him, telling stories of the terrible condition in which they had been left after the coming of the Quaker on the Friday evening. "I didn't never think I'd ever see my lord again," said the cook solemnly. "I didn't a'most hope it," said the housemaid, "after hearing the Quaker

gentleman read it all out of the newspaper." Lord Hampstead shook hands with them all, and laughed at the misfortune of the false telegram, and endeavoured to be well pleased with everything, but it occurred to him to think what must have been the condition of Mr. Fay's house that night, when he had come across from Holloway through the darkness and rain to find out for his girl what might be the truth or falsehood of the report which had reached him.

At 3.0 punctually he was in Paradise Row. Perhaps it was not unnatural that even then his advent should create emotion. As he turned down from the main road the very potboy from "The Duchess" rushed up to him, and congratulated him on his escape. "I have had nothing to escape," said Lord Hampstead trying to pass on. But Mrs. Grimley saw him, and came out to him. "Oh, my lord, we are so thankful;—indeed, we are."

"You are very good, ma'am," said the lord.

"And now, Lord 'Ampstead, mind and be true to that dear young lady who was well-nigh heart-broke when she heard as it were you who was smashed up."

He was hurrying on, finding it impossible to make any reply to this, when Miss Demijohn, seeing that Mrs. Grimley had been bold enough to address the noble visitor to their humble street, remembering how much she had personally done in the matter, having her mind full of the important fact that she had been the first to give information on the subject to the Row generally, thinking that no such appropriate occasion as this would ever again occur for making personal acquaintance with the lord, rushed out from her own house, and seized the young man's hand before he was able to defend himself. "My lord," she said, "my lord, we were all so depressed when we heard of it."

"Were you, indeed?"

"All the Row was depressed, my lord. But I was the first who knew it. It was I who communicated the sad tidings to Miss Fay. It was, indeed, my lord. I saw it in the *Evening Tell-Tale*, and went across with the paper at once."

"That was very good of you."

"Thank'ee, my lord. And, therefore, seeing you and knowing you,—for we all know you now in Paradise Row——"

"Do you know?"

"Every one of us, my lord. Therefore I thought I'd just make bold to come out and introduce myself. Here's Mrs. Duffer. I hope you'll let me introduce you to Mrs. Duffer of No. 17. Mrs. Duffer, Lord Hampstead. And oh, my lord, it will be such an honour to the Row if anything of that kind should happen."

Lord Hampstead, having with his best grace gone through the ceremony of shaking hands with Mrs. Duffer, who had come up to him and Clara just at the step of the Quaker's house, was at last allowed to knock at the door. Miss Fay would be with him in a minute, said the old woman as she showed him into the sitting-room up-stairs.

Marion, as soon as she heard the knock, ran for a moment to her own bed-room. Was it not much to her that he was with her again, not only alive, but uninjured, that she should again hear his voice, and see the light of his countenance, and become aware once more of a certain almost heavenly glory which seemed to surround her when she was in his presence? She was aware that on such occasions she felt herself to be lifted out of her ordinary prosaic life, and to be for a time floating, as it were, in some upper air; among the clouds, indeed;—

alas, yes; but among clouds which were silver-lined; in a heaven which could never be her own, but in which she could dwell, though it were but for an hour or two, in ecstasy,—if only he would allow her to do so without troubling her with further prayer. Then there came across her a thought that if only she could so begin this interview with him that it might seem to be an occasion of special joy,—as though it were a thanksgiving because he had come back to her safe,—she might, at any rate for this day, avoid words from him which might drive her again to refuse his request. He already knew that she loved him, must know of what value to her must be his life, must understand how this had come at first a terrible, crushing, killing sorrow, and then a relief which by the excess of its joy must have been almost too much for her. Could she not let all that be a thing acknowledged between them, which might be spoken of as between dearest friends, without any allusion for the present to that request which could never be granted?

But he, as he waited there a minute or two, was minded to make quite another use of the interview. He was burning to take her in his arms as his own, to press his lips to hers and know that she returned his caress, to have the one word spoken which would alone suffice to satisfy the dominating spirit of the man within him. Had she acceded to his request, then his demand would have been that she should at once become his wife, and he would not have rested at peace till he had reduced her months to weeks. He desired to have it all his own way. He had drawn her into his presence as soon almost as he had seen her. He had forced upon her his love. He had driven her to give him her heart, and to acknowledge that it was so. Of course he must go on with his triumph over her. She must

be his altogether, from the crown of her head to the soles of her feet,—and that without delay. His hunting and his yacht, his politics and his friendships, were nothing to him without Marion Fay. When she came into the room, his heart was in sympathy with her, but by no means his mind.

“My lord,” she said, letting her hand lie willingly between the pressure of his two, “you may guess what we suffered when we heard the report, and how we felt when we learnt the truth.”

“You got my telegram? I sent it as soon as I began to understand how foolish the people had been.”

“Oh yes, my lord. It was so good of you!”

“Marion, will you do something for me?”

“What shall I do, my lord?”

“Don’t call me, ‘my lord.’”

“But it is proper.”

“It is most improper, and abominable, and unnatural.”

“Lord Hampstead!”

“I hate it. You and I can understand each other, at any rate.”

“I hope so.”

“I hate it from everybody. I can’t tell the servants not to do it. They wouldn’t understand me. But from you! It seems always as though you were laughing at me.”

“Laugh at you!”

“You may if you like it. What is it you may not do with me? If it were really a joke, if you were quizzing, I shouldn’t mind it.” He held her hand the whole time, and she did not attempt to withdraw it. What did her hand signify? If she could only so manage with him on that day that he should be satis-

fied to be happy, and not trouble her with any request. "Marion," he said, drawing her towards him.

"Sit down, my lord. Well. I won't. You shan't be called my lord to-day, because I am so happy to see you;—because you have had so great an escape."

"But I didn't have any escape."

If only she could keep him in this way! If he would only talk to her about anything but his passion! "It seemed to me so, of course. Father was broken-hearted about it. He was as bad as I. Think of father going down without his tea to Hendon Hall, and driving the poor people there all out of their wits."

"Everybody was out of his wits."

"I was," she said, bobbing her head at him. She was just so far from him, she thought, as to be safe from any impetuous movement. "And Hannah was nearly as bad." Hannah was the old woman. "You may imagine we had a wretched night of it."

"And all about nothing," said he, falling into her mood in the moment. "But think of poor Walker."

"Yes, indeed! I suppose he has friends, too, who loved him, as—as some people love you. But he is not going to die?"

"I hope not. Who is that young woman opposite who rushed out to me in the street? She says she brought you the news first."

"Miss Demijohn."

"Is she a friend of yours?"

"No," said Marion, blushing as she spoke the word very firmly.

"I am rather glad of that, because I didn't fall in love with her. She introduced me to ever so many of the neighbours. The landlady of the public-house was one, I think."

"I am afraid they have offended you among them."

"Not in the least. I never take offence except when I think people mean it. But now, Marion, say one word to me."

"I have said many words. Have I not said nice words?"

"Every word out of your mouth is like music to me. But there is one word which I am dying to hear."

"What word?" she said. She knew that she should not have asked the question, but it was so necessary for her to put off the evil if it were only for a moment.

"It is whatever word you may choose to use when you speak to me as my wife. My mother used to call me John; the children call me Jack; my friends call me Hampstead. Invent something sweet for yourself. I always call you Marion because I love the sound so dearly."

"Every one calls me Marion."

"No! I never did so till I had told myself that, if possible, you should be my own. Do you remember when you poked the fire for me at Hendon Hall?"

"I do;—I do. It was wrong of me; was it not;—when I hardly knew you?"

"It was beyond measure good of you; but I did not dare to call you Marion then, though I knew your name as well as I do now, Marion! I have it here, written all round my heart." What could she say to a man who spoke to her after this fashion? It was as though an angel from heaven were courting her! If only she could have gone on listening so that nothing further should come of it! "Find some name for me, and tell me that it shall be written round your heart."

"Indeed it is. You know it is, Lord Hampstead."

"But what name?"

"Your friend;—your friend of friends."

"It will not do. It is cold."

"Then it is untrue to her from whom it comes. Do you think that my friendship is cold for you?"

She had turned towards him, and was sitting before him with her face looking into his, with her hands clasped as though in assurance of her truth;—when suddenly he had her in his arms and had pressed his lips to hers. In a moment she was standing in the middle of the room. Though he was strong, her strength was sufficient for her. "My lord!" she exclaimed.

"Ah, you are angry with me?"

"My lord, my lord,—I did not think you would treat me like that."

"But, Marion; do you not love me?"

"Have I not told you that I do? Have I not been true and honest to you? Do you not know it all?" But in truth he did not know it all. "And now I must bid you never, never to come again."

"But I shall come. I will come. I will come always. You will not cease to love me?"

"No;—not that—I cannot do that. But you must not come. You have done that which makes me ashamed of myself." At that moment the door was opened, and Mrs. Roden came into the room.

CHAPTER XI.

DI CRINOLA.

THE reader must submit to have himself carried back some weeks,—to those days early in January, when Mrs. Roden called upon her son to accompany her to Italy. Indeed, he must be carried back a long way beyond

that; but the time during which he need be so detained shall be short. A few pages will suffice to tell so much of the early life of this lady as will be necessary to account for her residence in Paradise Row.

Mary Roden, the lady whom we have known as Mrs. Roden, was left an orphan at the age of fifteen, her mother having died when she was little more than an infant. Her father was an Irish clergyman with no means of his own but what he secured from a small living; but his wife had inherited money amounting to about eight thousand pounds, and this had descended to Mary when her father died. The girl was then taken in charge by a cousin of her own, a lady ten years her senior who had lately married, and whom we have since met as Mrs. Vincent, living at Wimbledon. Mr. Vincent had been well connected and well-to-do in the world, and till he died the household in which Mary Roden had been brought up had been luxurious as well as comfortable. Nor did Mr. Vincent die till after his wife's cousin had found a husband for herself. Soon afterwards he was gathered to his fathers, leaving to his widow a comfortable, but not more than a comfortable, income.

The year before his death he and his wife had gone into Italy, rather on account of his health than for pleasure, and had then settled themselves at Verona for a winter,—a winter which eventually stretched itself into nearly a year, at the close of which Mr. Vincent died. But before that event took place Mary Roden had become a wife.

At Verona, at first at the house of her own cousin,—which was of course her own home,—and afterwards in the society of the place to which the Vincents had been made welcome,—Mary met a young man who was

known to all the world as the Duca di Crinola. No young man more beautiful to look at, more charming in manners, more ready in conversation, was then known in those parts of Italy than this young nobleman. In addition to these good gifts, he was supposed to have in his veins the very best blood in all Europe. It was declared on his behalf that he was related to the Bourbons and to the Hapsburgh family. Indeed there was very little of the best blood which Europe had produced in the last dozen centuries of which some small proportion was not running in his veins. He was too the eldest son of his father, who, though he possessed the most magnificent palace in Verona, had another equally magnificent in Venice, in which it suited him to live with his Duchessa. As the old nobleman did not come often to Verona, and as the young nobleman never went to Venice, the father and son did not see much of each other, an arrangement which was supposed to have its own comforts, as the young man was not disturbed in the possession of his hotel, and as the old man was reported in Verona generally to be arbitrary, hot-tempered, and tyrannical. It was therefore said of the young Duke by his friends that he was nearly as well off as though he had no father at all.

But there were other things in the history of the young Duke which, as they became known to the Vincents, did not seem to be altogether so charming. Though of all the palaces in Verona that in which he lived was by far the most beautiful to look at from the outside, it was not supposed to be furnished in a manner conformable to its external appearance. It was, indeed, declared that the rooms were for the most part bare; and the young Duke never gave the lie to these assertions by throwing them open to his friends. It was said of him

also that his income was so small and so precarious that it amounted almost to nothing, that the cross old Duke at Venice never allowed him a shilling, and that he had done everything in his power to destroy the hopes of a future inheritance. Nevertheless, he was beautiful to look at in regard to his outward attire, and could hardly have been better dressed had he been able to pay his tailor and shirt-maker quarterly. And he was a man of great accomplishments, who could talk various languages, who could paint, and model, and write sonnets, and dance to perfection. And he could talk of virtue, and in some sort seem to believe in it,—though he would sometimes confess of himself that Nature had not endowed him with the strength necessary for the performance of all the good things which he so thoroughly appreciated.

Such as he was he entirely gained the affection of Mary Roden. It is unnecessary here to tell the efforts that were made by Mrs. Vincent to prevent the marriage. Had she been less austere she might, perhaps, have prevailed with the girl. But as she began by pointing out to her cousin the horror of giving herself, who had been born and bred a Protestant, to a Roman Catholic,—and also of bestowing her English money upon an Italian,—all that she said was without effect. The state of Mr. Vincent's health made it impossible for them to move, or Mary might perhaps have been carried back to England. When she was told that the man was poor, she declared that there was so much the more reason why her money should be given to relieve the wants of the man she loved. It ended in their being married, and all that Mr. Vincent was able to accomplish was to see that the marriage ceremony should be performed after the fashion both of the Church of England and of the Church of Rome. Mary at the time

was more than twenty-one, and was thus able, with all the romance of girlhood, to pour her eight thousand pounds into the open hands of her thrice-noble and thrice-beautiful lover.

The Duchino with his young Duchessina went their way rejoicing, and left poor Mr. Vincent to die at Verona. Twelve months afterwards the widow had settled herself at the house at Wimbledon, from which she had in latter years paid her weekly visits to Paradise Row, and tidings had come from the young wife which were not altogether satisfactory. The news, indeed, which declared that a young little Duke had been born to her was accompanied by expressions of joy which the other surrounding incidents of her life were not permitted at the moment altogether to embitter. Her baby, her well-born beautiful baby, was for a few months allowed to be a joy to her, even though things were otherwise very sorrowful. But things were very sorrowful. The old Duke and the old Duchess would not acknowledge her. Then she learned that the quarrel between the father and son had been carried to such a pitch that no hope of reconciliation remained. Whatever was left of family property was gone as far as any inheritance on the part of the elder son was concerned. He had himself assisted in making over to a second brother all right that he possessed in the property belonging to the family. Then tidings of horror accumulated itself upon her and her baby. Then came tidings that her husband had been already married when he first met her,—which tidings did not reach her till he had left her alone, somewhere up among the Lakes, for an intended absence of three days. After that day she never saw him again. The next she heard of him was from Italy, from whence he wrote to her to tell her that she was an angel, and that

he, devil as he was, was not fit to appear in her presence. Other things had occurred during the fifteen months in which they had lived together to make her believe at any rate the truth of this last statement. It was not that she ceased to love him, but that she knew that he was not fit to be loved. When a woman is bad a man can generally get quit of her from his heart-strings;—but a woman has no such remedy. She can continue to love the dishonoured one without dishonour to herself,—and does so.

Among other misfortunes was the loss of all her money. There she was, in the little villa on the side of the lake, with no income,—and with statements floating about her that she had not, and never had had, a husband. It might well be that after that she should caution Marion Fay as to the imprudence of an exalted marriage. But there came to her assistance, if not friendship and love, in the midst of her misfortunes. Her brother-in-law,—if she had a husband or a brother-in-law,—came to her from the old Duke with terms of surrender; and there came also a man of business, a lawyer, from Venice, to make good the terms if they should be accepted. Though money was very scarce with the family, or the power of raising money, still such was the feeling of the old nobleman in her misfortunes that the entire sum which had been given up to his eldest son should be restored to trustees for her use and for the benefit of her baby, on condition that she should leave Italy, and consent to drop the title of the Di Crinola family. As to that question of a former marriage, the old lawyer declared that he was unable to give any certain information. The reprobate had no doubt gone through some form of a ceremony with a girl of low birth at Venice. It very probably was not a

marriage. The young Duchino, the brother, declared his belief that there had been no such marriage. But she, should she cling to the name, could not make her title good to it without obtaining proofs which they had not been able to find. No doubt she could call herself Duchess. Had she means at command she might probably cause herself to be received as such. But no property would thus be affected,—nor would it rob him, the younger son, of his right to call himself also by the title. The offer made to her was not ungenerous. The family owed her nothing, but were willing to sacrifice nearly half of all they had with the object of restoring to her the money of which the profligate had robbed her,—which he had been enabled to take from her by her own folly and credulity. In this terrible emergency of her life, Mrs. Vincent sent over to her a solicitor from London, between whom and the Italian man of business a bargain was struck. The young wife undertook to drop her husband's name, and to drop it also on behalf of her boy. Then the eight thousand pounds was repaid, and Mrs. Roden, as she afterwards called herself, went back to Wimbledon and to England with her baby.

So far the life of George Roden's mother had been most unfortunate. After that, for a period of sixteen years time went with her, if not altogether happily, at least quietly and comfortably. Then there came a subject of disruption. George Roden took upon himself to have opinions of his own; and would not hold his peace in the presence of Mrs. Vincent, to whom those opinions were most unacceptable. And they were the more unacceptable because the mother's tone of mind had always taken something of the bent which appeared so strongly afterwards in her son. George at any rate could not be

induced to be silent; nor,—which was worse,—could he after reaching his twentieth year be made to go to church with that regularity which was necessary for the elder lady's peace of mind. He at this time had achieved for himself a place in the office ruled over by our friend Sir Boreas, and had in this way become so much of a man as to be entitled to judge for himself. In this way there had been no quarrel between Mrs. Vincent and Mrs. Roden, but there had come a condition of things in which it had been thought expedient that they should live apart. Mrs. Roden had therefore taken for herself a house in Paradise Row, and those weekly inter-visittings had been commenced between her and her cousin.

Such had been the story of Mrs. Roden's life, till tidings were received in England that her husband was dead. The information had been sent to Mrs. Vincent by the younger son of the late old Duke, who was now a nobleman well known in the political life of his own country. He had stated that, to the best of his belief, his brother's first union had not been a legal marriage. He thought it right, he had said, to make this statement, and to say that as far as he was concerned he was willing to withdraw that compact upon which his father had insisted. If his sister-in-law wished to call herself by the name and title of Di Crinola, she might do so. Or if the young man of whom he spoke as his nephew wished to be known as Duca di Crinola he would raise no objection. But it must be remembered that he had nothing to offer to his relative but the barren tender of the name. He himself had succeeded to but very little, and that which he possessed had not been taken from his brother.

Then there were sundry meetings between Mrs. Vincent and Mrs. Roden, at which it was decided that Mrs. Roden

should go to Italy with her son. Her brother-in-law had been courteous to her, and had offered to receive her if she would come. Should she wish to use the name of Di Crinola, he had promised that she should be called by it in his house; so that the world around might know that she was recognized by him and his wife and children. She determined that she would at any rate make the journey, and that she would take her son with her.

George Roden had hitherto learnt nothing of his father or his family. In the many consultations held between his mother and Mrs. Vincent it had been decided that it would be better to keep him in the dark. Why fill his young imagination with the glory of a great title in order that he might learn at last, as might too probably be the case, that he had no right to the name, —no right to consider himself even to be his father's son? She, by her folly,—so she herself acknowledged,—had done all that was possible to annihilate herself as a woman. There was no name which she could give to her son as certainly as her own. This, which had been hers before she had been allured into a mock marriage, would at any rate not be disputed. And thus he had been kept in ignorance of his mother's story. Of course he had asked. It was no more than natural that he should ask. But when told that it was for his mother's comfort that he should ask no more, he had assented with that reticence which was peculiar to him. Then chance had thrown him into friendship with the young English nobleman, and the love of Lady Frances Trafford had followed.

His mother, when he consented to accompany her, had almost promised him that all mysteries should be cleared up between them before their return. In the train, before they reached Paris, a question was asked

and an answer given which served to tell much of the truth. As they came down to breakfast that morning, early in the dark January morning, he observed that his mother was dressed in deep mourning. It had always been her custom to wear black raiment. He could not remember that he had ever seen on her a coloured dress, or even a bright ribbon. And she was not now dressed quite as is a widow immediately on the death of her husband. It was now a quarter of a century since she had seen the man who had so ill-used her. According to the account which she had received, it was twelve months at least since he had died in one of the Grecian islands. The full weeds of a mourning widow would ill have befitted her condition of mind, or her immediate purpose. But yet there was a speciality of blackness in her garments which told him that she had dressed herself with a purpose as of mourning. "Mother," he said to her in the train, "you are in mourning,—as for a friend?" Then when she paused he asked again, "May I not be told for whom it is done? Am I not right in saying that it is so?"

"It is so, George."

"For whom then?"

They two were alone in the carriage, and why should his question not be answered now? But it had come to pass that there was a horror to her in mentioning the name of his father to him. "George," she said, "it is more than twenty-five years since I saw your father."

"Is he dead——only now?"

"It is only now,—only the other day,—that I have heard of his death."

"Why should not I also be in black?"

"I had not thought of it. But you never saw him

since he had you in his arms as a baby. You cannot mourn for him in heart."

"Do you?"

"It is hard to say for what we mourn sometimes. Of course I loved him once. There is still present to me a memory of what I loved,—of the man who won my heart by such gifts as belonged to him; and for that I mourn. He was beautiful and clever, and he charmed me. It is hard to say sometimes for what we mourn."

"Was he a foreigner, mother?"

"Yes, George. He was an Italian. You shall know it all soon now. But do not you mourn. To you no memories are left. Were it not for the necessity of the present moment, no idea of a father should ever be presented to you." She vouchsafed to tell him no more at that moment, and he pressed her with no further questions.

CHAPTER XII.

"I WILL COME BACK AS I WENT."

WHILE Lord Hampstead's party were at Gorse Hall, some weeks before poor Walker's accident, there came a letter from George Roden to Lady Frances, and she, when she reached Hendon Hall, found a second. Both these letters, or parts of them, shall be here given, as they will tell all that need be added to what is already known of the story of the man, and will explain to the reader the cause and manner of action which he adopted.

"Rome,

"January 30th, 18—

"DEAREST FANNY,—

"I wonder whether it will seem as odd to you to receive a letter from me written at Rome as it is to me to write it. Our letters hitherto have been very few in

number, and have only declared that in spite of obstacles we shall always love each other. I have never before had anything in truth to tell you; but now I have so much that I do not know how to begin or how to go on with it. But it must be written, as there is much that will interest you as my dearest friend, and much also that will concern yourself should you ever become my wife. It may be that a point will arise as to which you and your friends,—your father, for instance, and your brother,—will feel yourselves entitled to have a voice in deciding. It may be quite possible that your judgment, or, at any rate, that of your friends, may differ from my own. Should it be so I cannot say that I shall be prepared to yield; but I will, at any rate, enable you to submit the case to them with all fairness.

“I have told you more than once how little I have known of my own family,—that I have known indeed nothing. My mother has seemed to me to be perversely determined not to tell me all that which I will acknowledge I have thought that I ought to know. But with equal perversity I have refrained from asking questions on a subject of which I think I should have been told everything without questioning. And I am a man not curious by nature as to the past. I am more anxious as to what I may do myself than as to what others of my family may have done before me.

“When, however, my mother asked me to go with her to Italy, it was manifest that her journey had reference to her former life. I knew from circumstances which could not be hidden from me,—from her knowledge, for instance, of Italian, and from some relics which remained to her of her former life,—that she had lived for some period in this country. As my place of birth had never been mentioned to me, I could not but guess that I had

been born in Italy, and when I found that I was going there I felt certain that I must learn some portion of the story of which I had been kept in ignorance. Now I have learnt it all as far as my poor mother knows it herself; and as it will concern you to know it too, I must endeavour to explain to you all the details. Dearest Fanny, I do trust that when you have heard them you will think neither worse of me on that account,—nor better. It is as to the latter that I am really in fear. I wish to believe that no chance attribute could make me stand higher in your esteem than I have come to stand already by my own personal character."

Then he told her,—not, perhaps, quite so fully as the reader has heard it told in the last chapter,—the story of his mother's marriage and of his own birth. Before they had reached Rome, where the Duca di Crinola at present lived, and where he was at present a member of the Italian Cabinet, the mother had told her son all that she knew, having throughout the telling of the story unconsciously manifested to him her own desire to remain in obscurity, and to bear the name which had been hers for five-and-twenty years; but at the same time so to manage that he should return to England bearing the title to which by his birth she believed him to be entitled. When in discussing this he explained to her that it would be still necessary for him to earn his bread as a clerk in the Post Office in spite of his high-sounding nobility, and explained to her the absurdity of his sitting in Mr. Jerningham's room at the desk with young Crocker, and calling himself at the same time the Duca di Crinola, she in her arguments exhibited a weakness which he had hardly expected from her. She spoke vaguely, but with an assurance of personal hope, of Lady Frances, of Lord Hampstead, of

the Marquis of Kingsbury, and of Lord Persiflage,—as though by the means of these noble personages the Duca di Crinola might be able to live in idleness. Of all this Roden could say nothing in this first letter to Lady Frances. But it was to this that he alluded when he hoped that she would not think better of him because of the news which he sent her.

“At present,” he wrote, continuing his letter after the telling of the story, “we are staying with my uncle, as I presume I am entitled to call him. He is very gracious, as also are his wife and the young ladies who are my cousins; but I think that he is as anxious as I am that there should be no acknowledged branch of the family senior to his own. He is Duca di Crinola to all Italy, and will remain so whether I assume the title or not. Were I to take the name, and to remain in Italy,—which is altogether impossible,—I should be nobody. He who has made for himself a great position, and apparently has ample means, would not in truth be affected. But I am sure that he would not wish it. He is actuated by a sense of honesty, but he certainly has no desire to be incommoded by relatives who would, as regards the family, claim to be superior to himself. My dearest mother wishes to behave well to him, wishes to sacrifice herself; but is, I fear, above all things, anxious to procure for her son the name and title which his father bore.

“As for myself, you will, I think, already have perceived that it is my desire to remain as I was when last I saw you, and to be as ever

“Yours, most affectionately,

“GEORGE RODEN.”

Lady Frances was, as may be imagined, much startled at the receipt of this letter;—startled, and also pleased.

Though she had always declared to herself that she was in every respect satisfied with her lover from the Post Office, though she had been sure that she had never wanted him to be other than he was, still, when she heard of that fine-sounding name, there did for a moment come upon her an idea that, for his sake, it might be well that he should have the possession of all that his birth had done for him. But when she came to understand the meaning of his words, as she did on the second or third reading of his letter,—when she discovered what he meant by saying that he hoped she would not think better of him by reason of what he was telling her, when she understood the purport of the manner in which he signed his name, she resolved that in every respect she would think as he thought and act as he wished her to act. Whatever might be the name which he might be pleased to give her, with that would she be contented, nor would she be led by any one belonging to her to ask him to change his purpose.

For two days she kept the letter by her unanswered, and without speaking of it to anybody. Then she showed it to her brother, exacting from him a promise that he should not speak of it to any one without her permission. "It is George's secret," she said, "and I am sure you will see that I have no right to disclose it. I tell you because he would do so if he were here." Her brother was willing enough to make the promise, which would of course be in force only till he and Roden should see each other; but he could not be brought to agree with his sister as to his friend's view of the position.

"He may have what fancies he pleases about titles," he said, "as may I; but I do not think that he would be justified in repudiating his father's name. I feel it a burden and an absurdity to be born to be an earl and

a marquis, but I have to put up with it; and, though my reason and political feeling on the matter tell me that it is a burden and an absurdity, yet the burden is easily borne, and the absurdity does not annoy me much. There is a gratification in being honoured by those around you, though your conscience may be twinged that you yourself have done nothing to deserve it. It will be so with him if he takes his position here as an Italian nobleman."

"But he would still have to be a clerk in the Post Office."

"Probably not."

"But how would he live?" asked Lady Frances.

"The governor, you would find, would look upon him in a much more favourable light than he does at present."

"That would be most unreasonable."

"Not at all. It is not unreasonable that a Marquis of Kingsbury should be unwilling to give his daughter to George Roden, a clerk in the Post Office,—but that he should be willing to give her to a Duca di Crinola."

"What has that to do with earning money?"

"The Governor would probably find an income in one case, and not in the other. I do not quite say that it ought to be so, but it is not unreasonable that it should be so." Then Lady Frances said a great deal as to that pride in her lover which would not allow him to accept such a position as that which was now suggested.

There was a long discussion on the subject. Her brother explained to her how common it was for noblemen of high birth to live on means provided by their wives' fortunes, and how uncommon it was that men born to high titles should consent to serve as clerks in a public office. But his common sense had no effect

upon his sister, who ended the conversation by exacting from him a renewed assurance of secrecy. "I won't say a word till he comes," said Hampstead; "but you may be sure that a story like that will be all over London before he does come."

Lady Frances of course answered her lover's letter; but of what she said it is only necessary that the reader should know that she promised that in all things she would be entirely guided by his wishes.

Then came his second letter to her, dated on the day on which poor Walker had nearly been crushed to death. "I am so glad that you agree with me," he wrote. "Since my last letter to you everything here has been decided as far as I can decide it,—or, indeed, as far as any of us can do so. There can, I think, be no doubt as to the legality of my mother's marriage. My uncle is of the same opinion, and points out to me that were I to claim my father's name no one would attempt to dispute it. He alone could do so,—or rather would be the person to do so if it were done. He would make no such attempt, and would himself present me to the King here as the Duca di Crinola if I chose to remain and to accept the position. But I certainly will not do so. I should in the first place be obliged to give up my nationality. I could not live in England bearing an Italian title, except as an Italian. I do not know that as an Italian I should be forced to give up my place in the Post Office. Foreigners, I believe, are employed in the Civil Service. But there would be an absurdity in it which to me would be specially annoying. I could not live under such a weight of ridicule. Nor could I live in any position in which some meagre income might be found for me because of my nobility. No such income would be forthcoming here. I can imagine that

your father might make a provision for a poor son-in-law with a grand title. He ought not to do so, according to my ideas, but it might be possible that he should find himself persuaded to such weakness. But I could not accept it. I should not be above taking money with my wife, if it happened to come in my way, provided that I were earning an income myself to the best of my ability. For her sake I should do what might be best for her. But not even for your sake,—if you wished it, as I know you do not,—could I consent to hang about the world in idleness as an Italian duke without a shilling of my own. Therefore, my darling, I purpose to come back as I went,

“Your own,

“GEORGE RODEN.

“Clerk in the Post Office, and entitled to consider myself as being on ‘H.M.S.’ when at work from ten till four.”

This letter reached Lady Frances at Hendon Hall on the return of herself and her brother from Gorse Hall. But before that time the prophecy uttered by Lord Hampstead as to the story being all over London had already been in part fulfilled. Vivian during their hunting weeks at Gorse Hall had been running continually up and down from London, where his work as private secretary to the Secretary of State had been, of course, most constant and important. He had, nevertheless, managed to have three days a week in Northamptonshire, explaining to his friends in London that he did it by sitting up all night in the country, to his friends in the country that he sat up all night in town. There are some achievements which are never done in the presence of those who hear of them.

Catching salmon is one, and working all night is another. Vivian, however, managed to do what was required of him, and to enjoy his hunting at the same time.

On his arrival at Gorse Hall the day before the famous accident he had a budget of news of which he was very full, but of which he at first spoke only to Hampstead. He could not, at any rate, speak of it in the presence of Lady Frances. "You have heard this, haven't you, about George Roden?" he asked, as soon as he could get Lord Hampstead to himself.

"Heard what about George Roden?" asked the other, who, of course, had heard it all.

"The Italian title."

"What about an Italian title?"

"But have you heard it?"

"I have heard something. What have you heard?"

"George Roden is in Italy."

"Unless he has left it. He has been there, no doubt."

"And his mother." Hampstead nodded his head.

"I suppose you do know all about it?"

"I want to know what you know. What I have heard has come to me as a secret. Your story can probably be divulged."

"I don't know that. We are apt to be pretty close as to what we hear at the Foreign Office. But this didn't come as specially private. I've had a letter from Muscati, a very good fellow in the Foreign Office there, who had in some way heard your name as connected with Roden."

"That is very likely."

"And your sister's," said Vivian in a whisper.

"That is likely too. Men talk about anything now-a-days."

"Lord Persiflage has heard direct from Italy. He is interested, of course, as being brother-in-law to Lady Kingsbury."

"But what have they heard?"

"It seems that Roden isn't an Englishman at all."

"That will be as he likes, I take it. He has lived here as an Englishman for five-and-twenty years."

"But of course he'll prefer to be an Italian," said Vivian. "It turns out that he is heir to one of the oldest titles in Italy. You have heard of the Ducas di Crinola?"

"I have heard of them now."

"One of them is Minister of Education in the present Cabinet, and is likely to be the Premier. But he isn't the head of the family, and he isn't really the Duca di Crinola. He is called so, of course. But he isn't the head of the family. George Roden is the real Duca di Crinola. I thought there must be something special about the man when your sister took such a fancy to him."

"I always thought there was something special about him," said Hampstead; "otherwise I should hardly have liked him so well."

"So did I. He always seemed to be,—to me,—just one of ourselves, you know. A fellow doesn't come out like that unless he's somebody. You Radicals may say what you please, but silk purses don't get made out of sow's ears. Nobody stands up for blood less than I do; but, by George, it always shows itself. You wouldn't think Crocker was heir to a dukedom."

"Upon my word, I don't know. I have a great respect for Crocker."

"And now what's to be done?" asked Vivian.

"How done?"

"About Di Crinola? Lord Persiflage says that he can't remain in the Post Office."

"Why not?"

"I'm afraid he doesn't come in for much?"

"Not a shilling."

"Lord Persiflage thinks that something should be done for him. But it is so hard. It should be done in Italy, you know. I should think that they might make him extra Secretary of Legation, so as to leave him here. But then they have such a small salary!" As the story of George Roden's birth was thus known to all the Foreign Office, it was probable that Hampstead's prophecy would be altogether fulfilled.

CHAPTER XIII.

TRUE TIDINGS.

THE Foreign Office, from top to bottom, was very much moved on the occasion,—and not without cause. The title of Di Crinola was quite historic, and had existed for centuries. No Duca di Crinola,—at any rate, no respectable Duca di Crinola,—could be in England even as a temporary visitant without being considered as entitled to some consideration from the Foreign Office. The existing duke of that name, who had lately been best known, was at present a member of the Italian Ministry. Had he come he would have been entitled to great consideration. But he, as now appeared, was not the real Duca di Crinola. The real duke was an Englishman,—or an Anglicized Italian, or an Italianized Englishman. No one in the Foreign Office, not even the most ancient pundit there, quite knew what he was. It was clear that the Foreign Office must take some notice

of the young nobleman. But in all this was not contained more than half of the real reasons for peculiar consideration. This Anglicized Italian Duca was known to be engaged to the daughter of an English Marquis, to a lady who, if not niece, was next door to being niece to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs himself! Many years must have passed since an individual had sprung into notice so interesting in many different ways to all the body of the Foreign Office!

And this personage was a clerk in the Post Office! There had no doubt been a feeling in the Foreign Office, if not of actual disgrace, at any rate of mingled shame and regret, that a niece of their Secretary of State should have engaged herself to one so low. Had he been in the Foreign Office himself something might have been made of him;—but a Clerk in the Post Office! The thing had been whispered about and talked over, till there had come up an idea that Lady Frances should be sent away on some compulsory foreign mission, so as to be out of the pernicious young man's reach. But now it turned out suddenly that the young man was the Duca di Crinola, and it was evident to all of them that Lady Frances Trafford was justified in her choice.

But what was to be done with the Duca? Rumours reached the Foreign Office that the infatuated young nobleman intended to adhere to his most unaristocratic position. The absurdity of a clerk of the third class in one of the branches of the Post Office, with a salary of a hundred and seventy a year, and sitting in the same room with Crockers and Bobbins while he would have to be called by everybody the Duca di Crinola, was apparent to the mind of the lowest Foreign Office official. It couldn't be so, they said to each other. Something must be done. If Government pay were

necessary to him, could he not be transformed by a leap into the Elysium of their own department, where he might serve with some especial name invented for the occasion? Then there arose questions which no man could answer. Were he to be introduced into this new-fangled office proposed for him, would he come in as an Englishman or an Italian; and if as an Englishman, was it in accordance with received rules of etiquette that he should be called Duca di Crinola? Would it be possible in so special a case to get special permission from the Crown; or if not, could he be appointed to the Foreign Office as a foreigner? The special permission, though it was surrounded by so many difficulties, yet seemed to be easier and less monstrous than this latter suggestion. They understood that though he could not well be dismissed from the office which he already held, it might be difficult to appoint a foreign nobleman to the performance of duties which certainly required more than ordinary British tendencies. In this way the mind of the foreign Office was moved, and the coming of the young duke was awaited with considerable anxiety.

The news went beyond the Foreign Office. Whether it was that the Secretary of State himself told the story to the ladies of his household, or that it reached them through private secretaries, it was certainly the case that Lady Persiflage was enabled to write a very interesting letter to her sister, and that Lady Amaldina took the occasion of congratulating her cousin and of informing her lover.

Lady Kingsbury, when she received the news, was still engaged in pointing out to her husband the iniquity of his elder children in having admitted the visit of Mr. Roden to Hendon Hall. This, she persisted in saying, had been done in direct opposition to most solemn pro-

mises made by all the parties concerned. The Marquis at the time had recovered somewhat of his strength, in consequence, as was said among the household, of the removal of Mr. Greenwood into Shrewsbury. And the Marchioness took advantage of this improved condition on the part of her husband to make him sensible of the abominable iniquity of which the young persons had been guilty. The visit had occurred two months since, but the iniquity to Lady Kingsbury's thinking still demanded express condemnation and, if possible, punishment. "A direct and premeditated falsehood on the part of them all!" said Lady Kingsbury, standing over her husband, who was recumbent on the sofa in his own room.

"No; it wasn't," said the Marquis, who found it easier to deny the whole charge than to attempt in his weakness to divide the guilt.

"My dear! When she was allowed to go to Hendon Hall, was it not done on a sacred pledge that she should not see that horrid man? Did not Hampstead repeat the promise to my own ears?"

"How could he help his coming? I wish you wouldn't trouble me about it any more."

"Then I suppose that she is to have your leave to marry the man whenever she chooses!"

Then he roused himself with whatever strength he possessed, and begged her to leave him. With much indignation she stalked out of the room, and going to her apartments found the following letter, which had just arrived from her sister;—

"MY DEAR CLARA,—

"As you are down in the country, I suppose the news about Fanny's 'young man' has not yet reached you."

Fanny's young man! Had Fanny been the housemaid, it was thus that they might have spoken of her lover. Could it be that "Fanny and her young man" had already got themselves married? Lady Kingsbury, when she read this, almost let the letter drop from her hand, so much was she disgusted by the manner in which her sister spoke of this most unfortunate affair.

"I heard something of it only yesterday, and the rest of the details to-day. As it has come through the Foreign Office you may be quite sure that it is true, though it is so wonderful. The young man is not George Roden at all, nor is he an Englishman. He is an Italian, and his proper name and title is Duca di Crinola." Again Lady Kingsbury allowed the letter almost to drop; but on this occasion with feelings of a very different nature. What! not George Roden! Not a miserable clerk in the English Post Office! Duca di Crinola;—a title of which she thought that she remembered to have heard as belonging to some peculiarly ancient family! It was not to be believed. And yet it came from her sister, who was usually correct in all such matters;—and came also from the Foreign Office, which she regarded as the one really trustworthy source of information as to foreign matters of an aristocratic nature. "Duca di Crinola!" she said to herself, as she went on with the reading of her letter.

"There is a long story of the marriage of his mother which I do not quite understand as yet, but it is not necessary to the facts of the case. The young man has been recognized in his own country as entitled to all the honours of his family, and must be received so by us. Persiflage says that he will be ready to present him at Court on his return as Duca di Crinola, and will ask him at once to dine in Belgrave Square. It is a most romantic story, but must be regarded by you and me as

being very fortunate, as dear Fanny had certainly set her heart upon marrying the man. I am told that he inherits nothing but the bare title. Some foreign noblemen are, you know, very poor; and in this case the father, who was a '*mauvais sujet*,' contrived to destroy whatever rights of property he had. Lord Kingsbury probably will be able to do something for him. Perhaps he may succeed in getting official employment suited to his rank. At any rate we must all of us make the best of him for Fanny's sake. It will be better to have a Duca di Crinola among us, even though he should not have a shilling, than a Post Office clerk with two or three hundred a year.

"I asked Persiflage to write to Lord Kingsbury; but he tells me that I must do it all, because he is so busy. Were my brother-in-law well enough I think he should come up to town to make inquiry himself and to see the young man. If he cannot do so, he had better get Hampstead to take him down to Trafford. Hampstead and this young Duchino are luckily bosom friends. It tells well for Hampstead that, after all, he did not go so low for his associates as you thought he did. Amaldina intends to write to Fanny to congratulate her.

"Your affectionate sister,

"GERALDINE PERSIFLAGE."

Duca di Crinola! She could not quite believe it;—and yet she did believe it. Nor could she be quite sure as to herself whether she was happy in believing it or the reverse. It had been terrible to her to think that she should have to endure the name of being stepmother to a clerk in the Post Office. It would not be at all terrible to her to be stepmother to a Duca di Crinola, even though the stepson would have no property of his

own. That little misfortune would, as far as the feelings of society went, be swallowed up amidst the attributes of rank. Nothing would sound better than Duchessa or Duchessina! And, moreover, it would be all true! This was no paltry title which might be false, or might have been picked up, any how, the other day. All the world would know that the Italian Duke was the lineal representative of a magnificent family to whom this identical rank had belonged for many years. There were strong reasons for taking the young Duke and the young Duchess to her heart at once.

But then there were other reasons why she should not wish it to be true. In the first place she hated them both. Let the man be Duca di Crinola as much as he might, he would still have been a Post Office clerk, and Lady Frances would have admitted his courtship having believed him at the time to have been no more than a Post Office clerk. The sin would have been not the less abominable in the choice of her lover, although it might be expedient that the sin should be forgiven. And then the girl had insulted her, and there had been that between them which would prevent the possibility of future love; and would it not be hard upon her darlings if it should become necessary to carve out from the family property a permanent income for this Italian nobleman, and for a generation of Italian noblemen to come; and then what a triumph would this be for Hampstead, who, of all human beings, was the most distasteful to her.

But upon the whole she thought it would be best to accept the Duca. She must, indeed, accept him. Nothing that she could do would restore the young man to his humble desk and humble name. Nor would the Marquis be actuated by any prayer of hers in reference

to the carving of the property. It would be better for her to accept the young Duke and the young Duchess, and make the best of them. If only the story should at last be shown to be true!

The duty was imposed on her of communicating the story to the Marquis; but before she did so she was surprised by a visit from Mr. Greenwood. Mr. Roberts had used no more than the violence of argument, and Mr. Greenwood had been induced to take himself to Shrewsbury on the day named for his departure. If he went he would have 200*l.* a year from the Marquis,—and 100*l.* would be added by Lord Hampstead, of which the Marquis need not know anything. Unless he went on the day fixed that 100*l.* would not be added. A good deal was said on either side, but he went. The Marquis had refused to see him. The Marchioness had bade him adieu in a most formal manner,—in a manner quite unbecoming those familiar suggestions which, he thought, had been made to him as to a specially desirable event. But he had gone, and as he went he told himself that circumstances might yet occur in the family which might be of use to him. He, too, had heard the great family news,—perhaps through some under-satellite of the Foreign Office, and he came with the idea that he would be the first to make it known at Trafford Park.

He would have asked for the Marquis, but he knew that the Marquis would not receive him. Lady Kingsbury consented to see him, and he was ushered up to the room to which he had so often made his way without any asking. "I hope you are well, Mr. Greenwood," she said. "Are you still staying in the neighbourhood?" It was, however, well known at Trafford that he was at Shrewsbury.

"Yes, Lady Kingsbury. I have not gone from the

neighbourhood. I thought that perhaps you might want to see me again."

"I don't know that we need trouble you, Mr. Greenwood."

"I have come with some news respecting the family." As he said this he managed to assume the old look, and stood as though he had never moved from the place since he had last been in the room.

"Do sit down, Mr. Greenwood. What news?"

"Mr. George Roden, the clerk in the Post Office——"

But she was not going to have the tidings repeated to her by him, so as to give him any claim to gratitude for having brought them. "You mean the Duca di Crinola!"

"Oh," exclaimed Mr. Greenwood.

"I have heard all that, Mr. Greenwood."

"That the Post Office clerk is an Italian nobleman?"

"It suited the Italian nobleman for a time to be a Post Office clerk. That is what you mean."

"And Lady Frances is to be allowed——"

"Mr. Greenwood, I must ask you not to discuss Lady Frances here."

"Oh! Not to discuss her ladyship!"

"Surely you must be aware how angry the Marquis has been about it."

"Oh!" He had not seated himself, nor divested himself of that inquisitorial appearance which was so distasteful to her. "We used to discuss Lady Frances sometimes, Lady Kingsbury."

"I will not discuss her now. Let that be enough, Mr. Greenwood."

"Nor yet Lord Hampstead."

"Nor yet Lord Hampstead. I think it very wrong of you to come after all that took place. If the Marquis knew it——"

Oh! If the Marquis knew it! If the Marquis knew all, and if other people knew all! If it were known how often her ladyship had spoken, and how loud, as to the wished-for removal to a better world of his lordship's eldest son! But he could not dare to speak it out. And yet it was cruel on him! He had for some days felt her ladyship to be under his thumb, and now it seemed that she had escaped from him. "Oh! very well, Lady Kingsbury. Perhaps I had better go,—just for the present." And he went.

This served, at least, for corroboration. She did not dare to keep the secret long from her husband, and therefore, in the course of the evening, went down with her sister's letter in her hand. "What!" said the Marquis, when the story had been read to him. "What! Duca di Crinola."

"There can't be a doubt about it, my dear."

"And he a clerk in the Post Office?"

"He isn't a clerk in the Post Office now."

"I don't quite see what he will be then. It appears that he has inherited nothing."

"My sister says nothing."

"Then what's the good of his title. There is nothing so pernicious in the world as a pauper aristocracy. A clerk in the Post Office is entitled to have a wife, but a poor nobleman should at any rate let his poverty die with himself."

This was a view of the case which had not hitherto presented itself to Lady Kingsbury. When she suggested to him that the young nobleman should be asked down to Trafford, he did not seem to see that it was at all necessary. It would be much better that Fanny should come back. The young nobleman would, he supposed, live in his own country;—unless, indeed,

the whole tale was a cock-and-bull story made up by Persiflage at the Foreign Office. It was just the sort of thing, he said, that Persiflage would do. He had said not a word as to carving an income out of the property for the young noble couple when she left him.

CHAPTER XIV.

ALL THE WORLD KNOWS IT.

THE story was in truth all over London and half over England by the time that Lady Frances had returned to Hendon Hall. Though Vivian had made a Foreign Office secret of the affair at Gorse Hall, nevertheless it had been so commonly talked about during the last Sunday there, that Hautboy had told it all to poor Walker and to the Walker ladies. "By Jove, fancy!" Hautboy had said, "to go at once from a Post Office clerk to a duke! It's like some of those stories where a man goes to bed as a beggar and gets up as a prince. I wonder whether he likes it." Hampstead had of course discussed the matter very freely with his sister, still expressing an opinion that a man could not do other than take his father's name and his father's title. Lady Frances having thus become used to the subject was not surprised to find the following letter from her friend Lady Amaldina when she reached her home:—

"MY DEAREST FANNY,—

"I am indeed *delighted* to be able to congratulate you on the wonderful and *most romantic* story which has just been made known to us. I was never one of those who blamed you *very much* because you had

given your affections to a man *so much below* you in rank. Nevertheless, we all could not but feel that it was a pity that he should be a *Post Office clerk!* Now, indeed, you have reason to be proud! I have already read up the subject, and I find that the Ducas di Crinola are supposed to have *the very best blood* in Europe. There can be no doubt that one of the family married a *Bourbon* before they came to the French throne. I could send you all the details, only I do not doubt that you have found it out for yourself already. Another married a *second cousin of that Maximilian who married Mary of Burgundy*. One of the ladies of the family is supposed to have been the wife of the younger brother of one of the Guises, though it isn't *quite* certain whether they were ever married. But that little blot, my dear, will hardly affect *you* now. Taking the name altogether, I don't think there is anything higher in all Europe. Papa says that the Di Crinolas have always been doing something in Italy in the way of politics, or rebellion, or fighting. So it isn't as though they were all washed out and no longer of any account, like some of those we read of in history. Therefore I *do* think that you must be a *very happy girl*.

"I do feel *so completely snuffed out*, because, after all, the title of Merioneth was only conferred in the time of *Charles the Second*. And though there *was* a Lord Llwdythlw before that, even he was only created by *James the First*. The Powells no doubt are a very old Welsh family, and it is supposed that there was some relationship between them and the Tudors. But what is that to be compared to the *mediæval honours* of the *great House of Di Crinola?*

"Papa seems to think that he will not have *much*

fortune. I am one of those who do not think that a large income is at all to be compared to good birth in the way of giving *real position* in the world. Of course the Duke's estates are supposed to be *enormous*, and Llwdythlw, *even as an eldest son*, is a rich man; but as far as I can see there is nothing but trouble comes from it. If he has anything to do with a provincial town in the way of *rents* he is expected to lay the *first brick* of every church and institute about the place. If anything has to be *opened* he has to *open* it; and he is never allowed to eat his dinner without having to make *two or three speeches before and afterwards*. That's what I call a *great bore*. As far as I can see you will be always able to have your duke with you, because he will have no abominable public duties to look after.

"I suppose something will have to be *done* as to an *income*. Llwdythlw seems to think that he ought to get into Parliament. At least that is what he said to papa the other day; for I have not seen him myself for ever so long. He calls in the Square every Sunday just as we have done lunch, and never remains *above two minutes*. Last Sunday we had not heard of this *glorious* news; but papa did see him one day at the House, and that was what he said. I don't see how he is to get into the House *if he is an Italian Duke*, and I don't know *what* he'd get by going there. Papa says that he might be employed in some *diplomatic* position by his own Government; but I should think that the Marquis could do *something for him* as he has *so much* at his own disposition. Every acre of the Merioneth property is settled upon,—well,—whoever may happen to be the next heir. There will sure to be an income. There always is. Papa says that

the young dukes are always as well off, at any rate, as the young ravens.

"But, as I said before, what does all this signify in comparison with BLOOD. It does make your position, my dear, *quite another thing* from what we had expected. You would have kept your title no doubt; but *where* would *he* have been?

"I wonder whether you will be married now before August. I suppose not, because it doesn't seem to be quite certain when that *wicked papa* of his died; but I do hope that you won't. A day at last has been fixed for us;—the 20th of August, when, as I told you before, Lord David is to run away *instantly* after the ceremony so as to travel all night and *open something* the next morning at *Aberdeen*. I mention it now, because you will be *by far* the most *remarkable* of all my bevy of twenty. Of course your name will have been in the papers before that as *the* future Italian *Duchess*. That I own will be to me a just cause of pride. I think I have got my bevy all fixed at last, and I do *hope* that none of them will get married before *my* day. That has happened *so often* as to be quite *heart-breaking*. I shall cry if I find that *you* are to be married *first*.

"Believe me to be

"Your most affectionate friend and cousin,

"AMALDINA."

She wrote also to her future husband on the same subject;—

"DEAREST LLWDDYTHLW,—

"It was very *good* of you to come last Sunday, but I wish you hadn't gone away just because the Graiseburys were there. They would not have *eaten* you, though he is a Liberal.

"I have written to Fanny Trafford to congratulate her; because you know it is after all better than being a mere *Post Office clerk*. That was terrible;—so bad that one hardly knew how to mention her name in society! When people talked about it, I really *did feel* that I blushed all over. One can mention her name now because people are not *supposed* to know that he has got nothing. Nevertheless, it is very dreadful. *What on earth are they to live on?* I have told her about the young ravens. It was papa who said that when he first heard of this Di Crinola affair. I suppose a girl *ought to trust in Providence* when she marries a man without a shilling. That was what papa meant.

"Papa says that you said that he ought to go into Parliament. But what would he *get* by that? Perhaps as he is in the Post Office they might make him *Post-master-General*. Only papa says that if he were to go into Parliament, then he could not call himself Duca di Crinola. Altogether it seems to be *very sad*,—though not *quite* so sad as before. It is true that one of the Di Crinolas married a *Bourbon*, and that others of them have married ever so many *royalties*. I think there ought to be a law for giving such people something to live upon *out of the taxes*. How are they to be *expected* to live upon nothing? I asked papa whether he couldn't get it done; but he said it would be a *money bill*, and that *you* ought to take it up. Pray don't, for fear it should take you *all August*. I know you wouldn't have a scruple about putting off your own little affair, if anything of that kind *were* to come in the way. *I believe you'd like it.*

"*Do* stop a little longer when you come on Sunday. I have *ever so many* things to say to you. And if you can think of anything to be done for those *poor*

Di Crinolas, anything that won't take up *all* August,—
pray do it.

“Your own,

“AMY.”

One more letter shall be given; the answer, namely,
to the above from the lover to his future bride;—

“DEAR AMY,—

“I'll be at the Square on Sunday by three. I will walk out if you like, but it is always raining. I have to meet five or six conservative members later on in the afternoon as to the best thing to be done as to Mr. Green's Bill for lighting London by electricity. It would suit everybody; but some of our party, I am afraid, would go with them, and the Government is very shilly-shally. I have been going into the figures, and it has taken me all the week. Otherwise I would have been to see you.

“This Di Crinola affair is quite a romance. I did not mean that he ought to go into the House by way of getting an income. If he takes up the title of course he could not do so. If he takes it, he must regard himself as an Italian. I should think him quite as respectable, earning his bread as a clerk in a public office. They tell me he's a high-spirited fellow. If he is, that is what he will do.

“Yours affectionately,

“LLWDDYTHLW.”

When Lord Persiflage spoke of the matter to Baron d'Osse, the Italian Minister in London, the Baron quite acknowledged the position of the young Duca, and seemed to think that very little could be wanting to the making of the young man's fortune. “Ah, yes, your

Excellency," said the Baron. "He has no great estates. Here in England you all have great estates. It is very nice to have great estates. But he has an uncle who is a great man in Rome. And he will have a wife whose uncle is a very great man in London. What more should he want?" Then the Baron bowed to the Minister of State, and the Minister of State bowed to the Baron.

But the surprise expressed and the consternation felt at the Post Office almost exceeded the feelings excited at the Foreign Office or among Lady Fanny's family and friends. Dukes and Ministers, Barons and Princes, are terms familiar to the frequenters of the Foreign Office. Ambassadors, Secretaries, and diplomatic noblemen generally, are necessarily common in the mouths of all the officials. But at the Post Office such titles still carried with them something of awe. The very fact that a man whom they had seen should be a Duke was tremendous to the minds of Bobbin and Geraghty; and when it became known to them that a fellow workman in their own room, one who had in truth been no more than themselves, would henceforth be called by so august a title, it was as though the heavens and the earth were coming together. It affected Crocker in such a way that there was for a time a doubt whether his senses were not temporarily leaving him,—so that confinement would become necessary. Of course the matter had found its way into the newspapers. It became known at the office on the last day of February,—two days before the return of the Rodens to London.

"Have you heard it, Mr. Jerningham?" said Crocker, rushing into the room that morning. He was only ten minutes after the proper time, having put himself to the expense of a cab in his impetuous desire to be the first to convey the great news to his fellow clerks. But he

had been forestalled in his own room by the energy of Geraghty. The condition of mind created in Mr. Jerningham's bosom by the story told by Geraghty was of such a nature that he was unable to notice Crocker's sin in reference to the ten minutes.

"Dchuca di Crinola!" shouted Geraghty in his broadest brogue as Crocker came in; determined not to be done out of the honour fairly achieved by him.

"By Jove, yes!" A Duke," said Crocker. "A Duke! My own especial friend! Hampstead will be nowhere; nowhere; nowhere! Duca di Crinola! Isn't it beautiful? By George, I can't believe it. Can you, Mr. Jerningham?"

"I don't know what to believe," said Mr. Jerningham. "Only he was always a most steady, well-behaved young man, and the office will have a great loss of him."

"I suppose the Duke won't come and see us ever," said Bobbin. "I should like to shake hands with him once again."

"Shake hands with him," said Crocker. "I'm sure he won't drop out like that;—my own peculiar friend! I don't think I ever was so fond of anybody as George Ro——, the Duca di Crinola of course I mean. By George! haven't I sat at the same table with him for the last two years! Why, it was only a night or two before he started on this remarkable tour that I spent an evening with him in private society at Holloway!" Then he got up and walked about the room impetuously, clapping his hands, altogether carried away by the warmth of his feelings.

"I think you might as well sit down to your desk, Mr. Crocker," said Mr. Jerningham.

"Oh, come, bother, Mr. Jerningham!"

"I will not be spoken to in that way, Mr. Crocker."

"Upon my word, I didn't mean anything, sir. But when one has heard such news as this, how is it possible that one should compose oneself? It's a sort of thing that never happened before,—that one's own particular friend should turn out to be the Duca di Crinola. Did anybody ever read anything like it in a novel? Wouldn't it act well? Can't I see the first meeting between myself and the Duke at the Haymarket! 'Duke,' I should say—'Duke, I congratulate you on having come to your august family title, to which no one living could do so much honour as yourself.' Bancroft should do me. Bancroft would do me to the life, and the piece should be called the *Duke's Friend*. I suppose we shall call him Duke here in England, and Duca if we happen to be in Italy together; eh, Mr. Jerningham?"

"You had better sit down, Mr. Crocker, and try to do your work."

"I can't;—upon my word I can't. The emotion is too much for me. I couldn't do it if Æolus were here himself. By the way, I wonder whether Sir Boreas has heard the news." Then he rushed off, and absolutely made his way into the room of the great potentate.

"Yes, Mr. Crocker," said Sir Boreas, "I have heard it. I read the newspapers, no doubt, as well as you do."

"But it's true, Sir Boreas?"

"I heard it spoken of two or three days ago, Mr. Crocker, and I believe it to be true."

"He was my friend, Sir Boreas; my particular friend. Isn't it a wonderful thing,—that one's particular friend should turn out to be Duca di Crinola! And he didn't know a word of it himself. I feel quite sure that he didn't know a word of it."

"I really can't say, Mr. Crocker; but as you have now

expressed your wonder, perhaps you had better go back to your room and do your work."

"He pretends he knew it three days ago!" said Crocker, as he returned to his room. "I don't believe a word of it. He'd have written to me had it been known so long ago as that. I suppose he had too many things to think of, or he would have written to me."

"Go aisy, Crocker," said Geraghty.

"What do you mean by that? It's just the thing he would have done."

"I don't believe he ever wrote to you in his life," said Bobbin.

"You don't know anything about it. We were here together two years before you came into the office. Mr. Jerningham knows that we were always friends. Good heavens! Duca di Crinola! I tell you what it is, Mr. Jerningham. If it were ever so, I couldn't do anything to-day. You must let me go. There are mutual friends of ours to whom it is quite essential that I should talk it over." Then he took his hat and marched off to Holloway, and would have told the news to Miss Clara Demijohn had he succeeded in finding that young lady at home. Clara was at that moment discussing with Mrs. Duffer the wonderful fact that Mr. Walker and not Lord Hampstead had been kicked and trodden to pieces at Gimberley Green.

But even Æolus, great as he was, expressed himself with some surprise that afternoon to Mr. Jerningham as to the singular fortune which had befallen George Roden. "I believe it to be quite true, Mr. Jerningham. These wonderful things do happen sometimes."

"He won't stay with us, Sir Boreas, I suppose?"

"Not if he is Duca di Crinola. I don't think we could get on with a real duke. I don't know how it

will turn out. If he chooses to remain an Englishman he can't take the title. If he chooses to take the title he must be an Italian, then he'll have nothing to live on. My belief is we shan't see him any more. I wish it had been Crocker with all my heart."

CHAPTER XV.

"IT SHALL BE DONE."

LORD HAMPSTEAD has been left standing for a long time in Marion Fay's sitting-room after the perpetration of his great offence, and Mrs. Roden has been standing there also, having come to the house almost immediately after her return home from her Italian journey. Hampstead, of course, knew most of the details of the Di Crinola romance, but Marion had as yet heard nothing of it. There had been so much for him to say to her during the interview which had been so wretchedly interrupted by his violence that he had found no time to mention to her the name either of Roden or of Di Crinola.

"You have done that which makes me ashamed of myself." These had been Marion's last words as Mrs. Roden entered the room. "I didn't know Lord Hampstead was here," said Mrs. Roden.

"Oh, Mrs. Roden, I'm so glad you are come," exclaimed Marion. This of course was taken by the lady as a kindly expression of joy that she should have returned from her journey; whereas to Hampstead it conveyed an idea that Marion was congratulating herself that protection had come to her from further violence on his part. Poor Marion herself hardly knew her own

meaning,—hardly had any. She could not even tell herself that she was angry with her lover. It was probable that the very ecstasy of his love added fuel to hers. If a lover so placed as were this lover,—a lover who had come to her asking her to be his wife, and who had been received with the warmest assurance of her own affection for him,—if he were not justified in taking her in his arms and kissing her, when might a lover do so? The ways of the world were known to her well enough to make her feel that it was so, even in that moment of her perturbation. Angry with him! How could she be angry with him? He had asked her, and she had declared to him that she was not angry. Nevertheless she had been quite in earnest when she had said that now,—after the thing that he had done,—he must “never, never come to her again.”

She was not angry with him, but with herself she was angry. At the moment, when she was in his arms, she bethought herself how impossible had been the conditions she had imposed upon him. That he should be assured of her love, and yet not allowed to approach her as a lover! That he should be allowed to come there in order that she might be delighted in looking at him, in hearing his voice, in knowing and feeling that she was dear to him; but that he should be kept at arm's length because she had determined that she should not become his wife! That they should love each other dearly; but each with a different idea of love! It was her fault that he should be there in her presence at all. She had told herself that it was her duty to sacrifice herself, but she had only half carried out her duty. Should she not have kept her love to herself,—so that he might have left her, as he certainly would have done had she behaved to him coldly, and as her duty had

required of her. She had longed for some sweetness which would be sweet to her though only a vain encouragement to him. She had painted for her own eyes a foolish picture, had dreamed a silly dream. She had fancied that for the little of life that was left to her she might have been allowed the delight of loving, and had been vain enough to think that her lover might be true to her and yet not suffer himself! Her sacrifice had been altogether imperfect. With herself she was angry,—not with him. Angry with him, whose very footfall was music to her ears! Angry with him, whose smile to her was as a light specially sent from heaven for her behoof! Angry with him, the very energy of whose passion thrilled her with a sense of intoxicating joy! Angry with him because she had been enabled for once,—only for once,—to feel the glory of her life, to be encircled in the warmth of his arms, to become conscious of the majesty of his strength! No,—she was not angry. But he must be made to understand,—he must be taught to acknowledge,—that he must never, never come to her again. The mind can conceive a joy so exquisite that for the enjoyment of it, though it may last but for a moment, the tranquillity, even the happiness, of years may be given in exchange. It must be so with her. It had been her own doing, and if the exchange were a bad one, she must put up with the bargain. He must never come again. Then Mrs. Roden had entered the room, and she was forced to utter whatever word of welcome might first come to her tongue.

"Yes," said Hampstead, trying to smile, as though nothing had happened which called for special seriousness of manner, "I am here. I am here, and hope to be here often and often till I shall have succeeded in taking our Marion to another home."

"No," said Marion faintly, uttering her little protest ever so gently.

"You are very constant, my lord," said Mrs. Roden.

"I suppose a man is constant to what he really loves best. But what a history you have brought back with you, Mrs. Roden! I do not know whether I am to call you Mrs. Roden."

"Certainly, my lord, you are to call me so."

"What does it mean?" asked Marion.

"You have not heard," he said. "I have not been here time enough to tell her all this, Mrs. Roden."

"You know it then, Lord Hampstead?"

"Yes, I know it;—though Roden has not condescended to write me a line. What are we to call him?" To this Mrs. Roden made no answer on the spur of the moment. "Of course he has written to Fanny, and all the world knows it. It seems to have reached the Foreign Office first, and to have been sent down from thence to my people at Trafford. I suppose there isn't a club in London at which it has not been repeated a hundred times that George Roden is not George Roden."

"Not George Roden?" asked Marion.

"No, dearest. You will show yourself terribly ignorant if you call him so."

"What is he then, my lord?"

"Marion!"

"I beg your pardon. I will not do it again this time. But what is he?"

"He is the Duca di Crinola."

"Duke!" said Marion.

"That's what he is, Marion."

"Have they made him that over there?"

"Somebody made one of his ancestors that ever so many hundred years ago, when the Traffords were—;

well, I don't know what the Traffords were doing then;—fighting somewhere, I suppose, for whatever they could get. He means to take the title, I suppose?"

"He says not, my lord."

"He should do so."

"I think so too, Lord Hampstead. He is obstinate, you know; but, perhaps, he may consent to listen to some friend here. You will tell him."

"He had better ask others better able than I am to explain all the ins and outs of his position. He had better go to the Foreign Office and see my uncle. Where is he now?"

"He has gone to the Post Office. We reached home about noon, and he went at once. It was late yesterday when we reached Folkestone, and he let me stay there for the night."

"Has he always signed the old name?" asked Hampstead.

"Oh yes. I think he will not give it up."

"Nor his office?"

"Nor his office. As he says himself, what else will he have to live on?"

"My father might do something." Mrs. Roden shook her head. "My sister will have money, though it may probably be insufficient to furnish such an income as they will want."

"He would never live in idleness upon her money, my lord. Indeed I think I may say that he has quite resolved to drop the title as idle lumber. You perhaps know that he is not easily persuaded."

"The most obstinate fellow I ever knew in my life," said Hampstead, laughing. "And he has talked my sister over to his own views." Then he turned suddenly

round to Marion, and asked her a question. "Shall I go now, dearest?" he said.

She had already told him to go,—to go, and never to return to her. But the question was put to her in such a manner that were she simply to assent to his going, she would, by doing so, assent also to his returning. For the sake of her duty to him, in order that she might carry out that self-sacrifice in the performance of which she would now be so resolute, it was necessary that he should in truth be made to understand that he was not to come back to her. But how was this to be done while Mrs. Roden was present with them? Had he not been there then she could have asked her friend to help her in her great resolution. But before the two she could say nothing of that which it was in her heart to say to both of them. "If it pleases you, my lord," she said.

"I will not be 'my lord.' Here is Roden, who is a real duke, and whose ancestors have been dukes since long before Noah, and he is allowed to be called just what he pleases, and I am to have no voice in it with my own particular and dearest friends! Nevertheless I will go, and if I don't come to-day, or the day after, I will write you the prettiest little love-letter I can invent."

"Don't," she said;—oh so weakly, so vainly;—in a manner so utterly void of that intense meaning which she was anxious to throw into her words. She was conscious of her own weakness, and acknowledged to herself that there must be another interview, or at any rate a letter written on each side, before he could be made to understand her own purpose. If it must be done by a letter, how great would be the struggle to her in explaining herself. But perhaps even that

might be easier than the task of telling him all that she would have to tell, while he was standing by, impetuous, impatient, perhaps almost violent, assuring her of his love, and attempting to retain her by the pressure of his hand.

"But I shall," he said, as he held her now for a moment. "I am not quite sure whether I may not have to go to Trafford; and if so there shall be the love-letter. I feel conscious, Mrs. Roden, of being incapable of writing a proper love-letter. 'Dearest Marion, I am yours, and you are mine. Always believe me ever thine.' I don't know how to go beyond that. When a man is married, and can write about the children, or the leg of mutton, or what's to be done with his hunters, then I dare say it becomes easy. Good-bye, dearest. Good-bye, Mrs. Roden. I wish I could keep on calling you Duchess in revenge for all the 'my lordings.'" Then he left them.

There was a feeling in the mind of both of them that he had conducted himself just as a man would do who was in a high good-humour at having been permanently accepted by the girl to whom he had offered his hand. Marion Fay knew that it was not so;—knew that it never could be so. Mrs. Roden knew that it had not been so when she had left home, now nearly two months since; and knew also that Marion had pledged herself that it should not be so. The young lord then had been too strong with his love. A feeling of regret came over her as she remembered that the reasons against such a marriage were still as strong as ever. But yet how natural that it should be so! Was it possible that such a lover as Lord Hampstead should not succeed in his love if he were constant to it himself? Sorrow must come of it,—perhaps a tragedy so bitter that she could

hardly bring herself to think of it. And Marion had been so firm in her resolve that it should not be so. But yet it was natural, and she could not bring herself to express to the girl either anger or disappointment. "Is it to be?" she said, putting on her sweetest smile.

"No!" said Marion, standing up suddenly,—by no means smiling as she spoke! "It is not to be. Why do you look at me like that, Mrs. Roden? Did I not tell you before you went that it should never be so?"

"But he treats you as though he were engaged to you?"

"How can I help it? What can I do to prevent it? When I bid him go, he still comes back again, and when I tell him that I can never be his wife he will not believe me. He knows that I love him."

"You have told him that?"

"Told him! He wanted no telling. Of course he knew it. Love him! Oh, Mrs. Roden, if I could die for him, and so have done with it! And yet I would not wish to leave my dear father. What am I to do, Mrs. Roden?"

"But it seemed to me just now that you were so happy with him."

"I am never happy with him;—but yet I am as though I were in heaven."

"Marion!"

"I am never happy. I know that it cannot be, that it will not be, as he would have it. I know that I am letting him waste his sweetness all in vain. There should be some one else, oh, so different from me! There should be one like himself, beautiful, strong in health, with hot eager blood in her veins, with a grand name, with grand eyes and a broad brow and a noble figure, one who, in taking his name, will give him as

much as she takes—one, above all, who will not pine and fade before his eyes, and trouble him during her short life with sickness and doctors and all the fading hopes of a hopeless invalid. And yet I let him come, and I have told him how dearly I love him. He comes and he sees it in my eyes. And then it is so glorious to be loved as he loves. Oh, Mrs. Roden, he kissed me." That to Mrs. Roden did not seem to be extraordinary; but, not knowing what to say to it at the moment, she also kissed the girl. "Then I told him that he must go, and never come back to me again."

"Were you angry with him?"

"Angry with him! With myself I was angry. I had given him the right to do it. How could I be angry with him. And what does it matter;—except for his sake? If he could only understand! If he would only know that I am in earnest when I speak to him! But I am weak in everything except one thing. He will never make me say that I will be his wife."

"My Marion! Dear Marion!"

"But father wishes it."

"Wishes you to become his wife?"

"He wishes it. Why should I not be like any other girl, he says. How can I tell him? How can I say that I am not like to other girls because of my darling, my own dearest mother? And yet he does not know it. He does not see it, though he has seen so much. He will not see it till I am there, on my bed, unable to come to him when he wants me."

"There is nothing now to show him or me that you may not live to be old as he is."

"I shall not live to be old. You know that I shall not live to be more than young. Have any of them lived? For my father,—for my dear father,—he must

find it out for himself. I have sometimes thought that even yet I might last his time—that I might be with him to the end. It might be so,—only that all this tortures me.”

“Shall I tell him;—shall I tell Lord Hampstead?”

“He must at any rate be told. He is not bound to me as my father is. For him there need be no great sorrow.” At this Mrs. Roden shook her head. “Must it be so?”

“If he is banished from your presence he will not bear it lightly.”

“Will a young man love me like that;—a young man who has so much in the world to occupy him? He has his ship, and his hounds, and his friends, and his great wealth. It is only girls, I think, who love like that.”

“He must bear his sorrow as others do.”

“But it shall be made as light as I can make it,—shall it not? I should have done this before. I should have done it sooner. Had he been made to go away at once, then he would not have suffered. Why would he not go when I told him? Why would he not believe me when I spoke to him? I should have heard all his words and never have answered him even with a smile. I should not have trembled when he told me that I was there, at his hearth, as a friend. But who thought then, Mrs. Roden, that this young nobleman would have really cared for the Quaker girl?”

“I saw it, Marion.”

“Could you see just by looking at him that he was so different from others? Are his truth, and his loving heart, and his high honour, and his pure honesty, all written in his eyes,—to you as they are to me? But, Mrs. Roden, there shall be an end of it! Though it

may kill me,—though it may for a little time half-break his heart,—it shall be done! Oh, that his dear heart should be half-broken for me! I will think of it, Mrs. Roden, to night. If writing may do it, perhaps I may write. Or, perhaps, I may say a word that he will at least understand. If not you shall tell him. But, Mrs. Roden, it shall be done!”

CHAPTER XVI.

MARION WILL CERTAINLY HAVE HER WAY.

ON the day but one following there came a letter to Marion from Hampstead,—the love-letter which he had promised her;—

“DEAR MARION—

“It is as I supposed. This affair about Roden has stirred them up down at Trafford amazingly. My father wants me to go to him. You know all about my sister. I suppose she will have her way now. I think the girls always do have their way. She will be left alone, and I have told her to go and see you as soon as I have gone. You should tell her that she ought to make him call himself by his father’s proper name.

“In my case, dearest, it is not the girl that is to have her own way. It’s the young man that is to do just as he pleases. My girl, my own one, my love, my treasure, think of it all, and ask yourself whether it is in your heart to refuse to bid me be happy. Were it not for all that you have said yourself I should not be vain enough to be happy at this moment, as I am. But you have told me that you love me. Ask your father,

and he will tell you that, as it is so, it is your duty to promise to be my wife.

"I may be away for a day or two,—perhaps for a week. Write to me at Trafford,—Trafford Park, Shrewsbury,—and say that it shall be so. I sometimes think that you do not understand how absolutely my heart is set upon you,—so that no pleasures are pleasant to me, no employments useful, except in so far as I can make them so by thinking of your love.

"Dearest, dearest Marion,

"Your own,

"HAMPSTEAD."

"Remember there must not be a word about a lord inside the envelope. It is very bad to me when it comes from Mrs. Roden, or from a friend such as she is; but it simply excruciates me from you. It seems to imply that you are determined to regard me as a stranger."

She read the letter a dozen times, pressing it to her lips and to her bosom. She might do that at least. He would never know how she treated this only letter that she ever had received from him, the only letter that she would receive. These caresses were only such as those which came from her heart, to relieve her solitude. It might be absurd in her to think of the words he had spoken, and to kiss the lines which he had written. Were she now on her deathbed that would be permitted to her. Wherever she might lay her head till the last day should come that letter should be always within her reach. "My girl, my own one, my love, my treasure!" How long would it last with him? Was it not her duty to hope that the words were silly words, written as young men do write, having no eagerness of purpose,—just playing with the toy of

the moment? Could it be that she should wish them to be true, knowing, as she did, that his girl, his love, his treasure, as he called her, could never be given up to him? And yet she did believe them to be true, knew them to be true, and took an exceeding joy in the assurance. It was as though the beauty and excellence of their truth atoned to her for all else that was troublous to her in the condition of her life. She had not lived in vain. Her life now could never be a vain and empty space of time, as it had been consecrated and ennobled and blessed by such a love as this. And yet she must make the suffering to him as light as possible. Though there might be an ecstasy of joy to her in knowing that she was loved, there could be nothing akin to that in him. He wanted his treasure, and could only tell him that he might never have it. "Think of it all, and ask yourself whether it is in your heart to refuse to bid me be happy." It was in her heart to do it. Though it might break her heart she would do it. It was the one thing to do which was her paramount duty. "You have told me that you love me." Truly she had told him so, and certainly she would never recall her words. If he ever thought of her in future years when she should long have been at her rest,—and she thought that now and again he would think of her, even when that noble bride should be sitting at his table,—he should always remember that she had given him her whole heart. He had bade her write to him at Trafford. She would obey him at once in that; but she would tell him that she could not obey him in aught else. "Tell me that it shall be so," he had said to her with his sweet, imperious, manly words. There had been something of command about him always, which had helped to make

him so perfect in her eyes. "You do not understand," he said, "how absolutely my heart is set upon you." Did he understand, she wondered, how absolutely her heart had been set upon him? "No pleasures are pleasant to me, no employments useful, unless I can make them so by thinking of your love!" It was right that he as a man,—and such a man,—should have pleasures and employments, and it was sweet to her to be told that they could be gilded by the remembrance of her smiles. But for her, from the moment in which she had known him, there could be no pleasure but to think of him, no serious employment but to resolve how best she might do her duty to him.

It was not till the next morning that she took up her pen to begin her all-important letter. Though her resolution had been so firmly made, yet there had been much need for thinking before she could sit down to form the sentences. For a while she had told herself that it would be well first to consult her father; but before her father had returned to her she had remembered that nothing which he could say would induce her in the least to alter her purpose. His wishes had been made known to her; but he had failed altogether to understand the nature of the duty she had imposed upon herself. Thus she let that day pass by, although she knew that the writing of the letter would be an affair of much time to her. She could not take her sheet of paper, and scribble off warm words of love as he had done. To ask, or to give, in a matter of love must surely, she thought, be easy enough. But to have given and then to refuse—that was the difficulty. There was so much to say of moment both to herself and to him, or rather so much to signify, that it was not at one sitting, or with a single copy, that this letter could be

written. He must be assured, no doubt, of her love; but he must be made to understand,—quite to understand, that her love could be of no avail to him. And how was she to obey him as to her mode of addressing him? “It simply excruciates me from you,” he had said, thus debarring her from that only appellation which would certainly be the easiest, and which seemed to her the only one becoming. At last the letter, when written, ran as follows;—

“How I am to begin my letter I do not know, as you have forbidden me to use the only words which would come naturally. But I love you too well to displease you in so small a matter. My poor letter must therefore go to you without any such beginning as is usual. Indeed, I love you with all my heart. I told you that before, and I will not shame myself by saying that it was untrue. But I told you also before that I could not be your wife. Dearest love, I can only say again what I said before. Dearly as I love you I cannot become your wife. You bid me to think of it all, and to ask myself whether it is in my heart to refuse to bid you to be happy. It is not in my heart to let you do that which certainly would make you unhappy.

“There are two reasons for this. Of the first, though it is quite sufficient, I know that you will make nothing. When I tell you that you ought not to choose such a one as me for your wife because my manners of life have not fitted me for such a position, then you sometimes laugh at me, and sometimes are half angry,—with that fine way you have of commanding those that are about you. But not the less am I sure that I am right. I do believe that of all human beings poor Marion Fay is the dearest to you. When you tell me of your love and your

treasure I do not for a moment doubt that it is all true. And were I to be your wife, your honour and your honesty would force you to be good to me. But when you found that I was not as are other grand ladies, then I think you would be disappointed. I should know it by every line of your dear face, and when I saw it there I should be broken-hearted.

"But this is not all. If there were nothing further, I think I should give way because I am only a weak girl; and your words, my own, own love, would get the better of me. But there is another thing. It is hard for me to tell, and why should you be troubled with it? But I think if I tell it you out and out, so as to make you understand the truth, then you will be convinced. Mrs. Roden could tell you the same. My dear, dear father could tell you also; only that he will not allow himself to believe, because of his love for the only child that remains to him. My mother died; and all my brothers and sisters have died. And I also shall die young.

"Is not that enough? I know that it will be enough. Knowing that it will be enough, may I not speak out to you, and tell you all my heart? Will you not let me do so, as though it had been understood between us, that though we can never be more to each other than we are, yet we may be allowed to love each other? Oh, my dearest, my only dearest, just for this once I have found the words in which I may address you. I cannot comfort you as I can myself, because you are a man, and cannot find comfort in sadness and disappointment, as a girl may do. A man thinks that he should win for himself all that he wants. For a girl, I think it is sufficient for her to feel that, as far as she herself is concerned, that would have been given to her which she most desires, had not Fortune been unkind. You, dearest, cannot

have what you want, because you have come to poor Marion Fay with all the glory and sweetness of your love. You must suffer for a while. I, who would so willingly give my life to serve you, must tell you that it will be so. But as you are a man, pluck up your heart, and tell yourself that it shall only be for a time. The shorter the better, and the stronger you will show yourself in overcoming the evil that oppresses you. And remember this. Should Marion Fay live to know that you had brought a bride home to your house, as it will be your duty to do, it will be a comfort to her to feel that the evil she has done has been cured.

“MARION.”

“I cannot tell you how proud I should be to see your sister if she will condescend to come and see me. Or would it not be better that I should go over to Hendon Hall? I could manage it without trouble. Do not you write about it, but ask her to send me one word.”

Such was the letter when it was at last finished and despatched. As soon as it was gone,—dropped irrevocably by her own hand into the pillar letter-box which stood at the corner opposite to the public-house,—she told her father what she had done. “And why?” he said crossly. “I do not understand thee. Thou art flighty and fickle, and knowest not thy own mind.”

“Yes, father; I have known my own mind always in this matter. It was not fitting.”

“If he thinks it fitting, why shouldst thou object?”

“I am not fit, father, to be the wife of a great nobleman. Nor can I trust my own health.” This she said with a courage and firmness which seemed to silence him,—looking at him as though by her looks she forbade

him to urge the matter further. Then she put her arms round him and kissed him. "Will it not be better, father, that you and I shall remain together till the last?"

"Nothing can be better for me that will not also be best for thee."

"For me it will be best. Father, let it be so, and let this young man be no more thought of between us." In that she asked more than could be granted to her; but for some days Lord Hampstead's name was not mentioned between them.

Two days afterwards Lady Frances came to her. "Let me look at you," said Marion, when the other girl had taken her in her arms and kissed her. "I like to look at you, to see whether you are like him. To my eyes he is so beautiful."

"More so than I am."

"You are a—lady, and he is a man. But you are like him, and very beautiful. You, too, have a lover, living close to us?"

"Well, yes. I suppose I must own it."

"Why should you not own it? It is good to be loved and to love. And he has become a great nobleman,—like your brother."

"No, Marion; he is not that.—May I call you Marion?"

"Why not? He called me Marion almost at once."

"Did he so?"

"Just as though it were a thing of course. But I noticed it. It was not when he bade me poke the fire, but the next time. Did he tell you about the fire?"

"No, indeed."

"A man does not tell of such things, I think; but a girl remembers them. It is so good of you to come. You know—do you not?"

"Know what?"

"That I,—and your brother,—have settled everything at last?" The smile of pleasant good humour passed away from the face of Lady Frances, but at the moment she made no reply. "It is well that you should know. He knows now, I am sure. After what I said in my letter he will not contradict me again." Lady Frances shook her head. "I have told him that while I live he of all the world must be dearest to me. But that will be all."

"Why should you—not live?"

"Lady Frances——"

"Nay, call me Fanny."

"You shall be Fanny if you will let me tell you. Oh! I do so wish that you would understand it all, and make me tell you nothing further. But you must know,—you must know that it cannot be as your brother has wished. If it were only less known,—if he would consent and you would consent,—then I think that I could be happy. What is it after all,—the few years that we may have to live here? Shall we not meet again, and shall we not love each other then?"

"I hope so."

"If you can really hope it, then why should we not be happy? But how could I hope it if, with my eyes open, I were to bring a great misfortune upon him? If I did him an evil here, could I hope that he would love me in Heaven, when he would know all the secrets of my heart? But if he shall say to himself that I denied myself,—for his sake; that I refused to be taken into his arms because it would be bad for him, then, though there may be some one dearer, then shall not I also be dear to him?" The other girl could only cling to her and embrace her. "When he shall have strong boys round his hearth,—the hearth he spoke of as though it

were almost mine,—and little girls with pink cheeks and bonny brows, and shall know, as he will then, what I might have done for him, will he not pray for me, and tell me in his prayers that when we shall meet hereafter I shall still be dear to him? And when she knows it all, she who shall lie on his breast, shall I not be dear also to her?”

“Oh, my sister!”

“He will tell her. I think he will tell her,—because of his truth, his honour, and his manliness.”

Lady Frances, before she left the house, had been made to understand that her brother could not have his way in the matter which was so near his heart, and that the Quaker’s daughter would certainly have hers.

CHAPTER XVII.

“BUT HE IS;—HE IS.”

GEORGE RODEN had come to a decision as to his title, and had told every one concerned that he meant to be as he always had been,—George Roden, a clerk in the Post Office. When spoken to, on this side and the other, as to the propriety,—or rather impropriety,—of his decision, he had smiled for the most part, and had said but little, but had been very confident in himself. To none of the arguments used against him would he yield in the least. As to his mother’s fame, he said, no one had doubted, and no one would doubt it for a moment. His mother’s name had been settled by herself, and she had borne it for a quarter of a century. She had not herself thought of changing it. For her to blaze out into the world as a Duchess,—it would be

contrary to her feelings, to her taste, and to her comfort! She would have no means of maintaining the title,—and would be reduced to the necessity of still living in Paradise Row, with the simple addition of an absurd nickname. As to that, no question had been raised. It was only for him that she required the new appellation.

As for herself, the whole thing had been settled at once by her own good judgment.

As for himself, he said, the arguments were still stronger against the absurd use of the grand title. It was imperative on him to earn his bread, and his only means of doing so was by doing his work as a clerk in the Post Office. Everybody admitted that it would not be becoming that a Duke should be a clerk in the Post Office. It would be so unbecoming, he declared, that he doubted whether any man could be found brave enough to go through the world with such a fool's cap on his head. At any rate he had no such courage. Moreover, no Englishman, as he had been told, could at his own will and pleasure call himself by a foreign title. It was his pleasure to be an Englishman. He had always been an Englishman. As an inhabitant of Holloway he had voted for two Radical members for the Borough of Islington. He would not stultify his own proceedings, and declare that everything which he had done was wrong. It was thus that he argued the matter; and, as it seemed, no one could take upon himself to prove that he was an Italian, or to prove that he was a Duke.

But, though he seemed to be, if not logical, at any rate rational, the world generally did not agree with him. Wherever he was encountered there seemed to be an opinion that he ought to assume whatever name

and whatever rights belonged to his father. Even at the Post Office the world was against him.

"I don't quite know why you couldn't do it," said Sir Boreas, when Roden put it to him whether it would be practicable that a young man calling himself Duca di Crinola should take his place as a clerk in Mr. Jerningham's room. It may be remembered that Sir Boreas had himself expressed some difficulty in the matter. He had told Mr. Jerningham that he did not think that they could get on very well with a real Duke among them. It was thus that the matter had at first struck him. But he was a brave man, and, when he came to look at it all round, he did not see that there would be any impossibility. It would be a nine days' wonder, no doubt. But the man would be there just the same,—the Post Office clerk inside the Duke. The work would be done, and after a little time even he would become used to having a Duke among his subordinates. As to whether the Duke were a foreigner or an Englishman,—that, he declared, would not matter in the least, as far as the Post Office was concerned. "I really don't see why you shouldn't try it," said Sir Boreas.

"The absurdity would be so great that it would crush me, sir. I shouldn't be worth my salt," said Roden.

"That's a kind of thing that wears itself out very quickly. You would feel odd at first,—and so would the other men, and the messengers. I should feel a little odd when I asked some one to send the Duca di Crinola to me, for we are not in the habit of sending for Dukes. But there is nothing that you can't get used to. If your father had been a Prince I don't think I should break down under it after the first month."

"What good would it do me, Sir Boreas?"

"I think it would do you good. It is difficult to explain the good,—particularly to a man who is so violently opposed as you to all ideas of rank. But——."

"You mean that I should get promoted quicker because of my title?"

"I think it probable that the Civil Service generally would find itself able to do something more for a good officer with a high name than for a good officer without one."

"Then, Sir Boreas, the Civil Service ought to be ashamed of itself."

"Perhaps so;—but such would be the fact. Somebody would interfere to prevent the anomaly of the Duca di Crinola sitting at the same table with Mr. Crocker. I will not dispute it with you,—whether it ought to be so;—but, if it be probable, there is no reason why you should not take advantage of your good fortune, if you have capacity and courage enough to act up to it. Of course what we all want in life is success. If a chance comes in your way I don't see why you should fling it away." This was the wisdom of Sir Boreas; but Roden would not take advantage of it. He thanked the great man for his kindness and sympathy, but declined to reconsider his decision.

In the outer office,—in the room, for instance, in which Mr. Jerningham sat with Crocker and Bobbin and Geraghty, the feeling was very much stronger in favour of the title, and was expressed in stronger language. Crocker could not contain himself when he heard that there was a doubt upon the subject. On Roden's first arrival at the office Crocker almost flung himself into his friend's arms, with just a single exclamation. "Duca, Duca, Duca!" he had said, and had then fallen back into his own seat overcome by

his emotions. Roden had passed this by without remark. It was very distasteful to him, and disgusting. He would fain have been able to sit down at his own desk, and go on with his own work, without any special notice of the occasion, other than the ordinary greeting occasioned by his return. It was distressing to him that anything should have been known about his father and his father's title. But that it should be known was natural. The world had heard of it. The world had put it into the newspapers, and the world had talked about it. Of course Mr. Jerningham also would talk of it, and the two younger clerks,—and Crocker. Crocker would of course talk of it louder than any one else. That was to be expected. A certain amount of misconduct was to be expected from Crocker, and must be forgiven. Therefore he passed over the ecstatic and almost hysterical repetition of the title which his father had borne, hoping that Crocker might be overcome by the effort, and be tranquil. But Crocker was not so easily overcome. He did sit for a moment or two on his seat with his mouth open; but he was only preparing himself for his great demonstration.

"We are very glad to see you again,—sir," said Mr. Jerningham; not at first quite knowing how it would become him to address his fellow-clerk.

"Thank you, Mr. Jerningham. I have got back again safe."

"I am sure we are all delighted to hear—what we have heard," said Mr. Jerningham cautiously.

"By George, yes," said Bobbin. "I suppose it's true; isn't it? Such a beautiful name!"

"There are so many things are true, and so many are false, that I don't quite know how to answer you," said Roden.

"But you are——?" asked Geraghty; and then he stopped, not quite daring to trust himself with the grand title.

"No;—that's just what I'm not," replied the other.

"But he is," shouted Crocker, jumping from his seat. "He is! He is! It's quite true. He is Duca di Crinola. Of course we'll call him so, Mr. Jerningham;—eh?"

"I am sure I don't know," said Mr. Jerningham with great caution.

"You'll allow me to know my own name," said Roden.

"No! no!" continued Crocker. "It's all very well for your modesty, but it's a kind of thing which your friends can't stand. We are quite sure that you're the Duca." There was something in the Italian title which was peculiarly soothing to Crocker's ears. "A man has to be called by what he is, not by what he chooses. If the Duke of Middlesex called himself Mr. Smith, he'd be Duke all the same;—wouldn't he, Mr. Jerningham? All the world would call him Duke. So it must be with you. I wouldn't call your Grace Mr.——; you know what I mean, but I won't pronounce it ever again;—not for ever so much." Roden's brow became very black as he found himself subjected to the effects of the man's folly. "I call upon the whole office," continued Crocker, "for the sake of its own honour, to give our dear and highly-esteemed friend his proper name on all occasions. Here's to the health of the Duca di Crinola!" Just at that moment Crocker's lunch had been brought in, consisting of bread and cheese and a pint of stout. The pewter pot was put to his mouth and the toast was drank to the honour and glory of the drinker's noble friend with no feeling of intended ridicule. It was a grand thing to Crocker to have been

brought into contact with a man possessed of so noble a title. In his heart of hearts he revered "The Duca." He would willingly have stayed there till six or seven o'clock and have done all the Duca's work for him,—because the Duca was a Duca. He would not have done it satisfactorily, because it was not in his nature to do any work well, but he would have done it as well as he did his own. He hated work; but he would have sooner worked all night than see a Duca do it,—so great was his reverence for the aristocracy generally.

"Mr. Crocker," said Mr. Jerningham severely, "you are making yourself a nuisance. You generally do."

"A nuisance!"

"Yes; a nuisance. When you see that a gentleman doesn't wish a thing, you oughtn't to do it."

"But when a man's name is his name!"

"Never mind. When he doesn't wish it, you oughtn't to do it!"

"If it's a man's own real name!"

"Never mind," said Mr. Jerningham.

"If it shoots a gentleman to be incognito, why isn't he to do as he pleases?" asked Geraghty.

"If the Duke of Middlesex did call himself Mr. Smith," said Bobbin, "any gentleman that was a gentleman would fall in with his views." Crocker, not conquered, but for the moment silenced, seated himself in a dudgeon at his desk. It might do very well for poor fellows, weak creatures like Jerningham, Bobbin, and Geraghty, thus to be done out of their prey;—but he would not be cheated in that way. The Duca di Crinola should be Duca di Crinola as far as he, Crocker, could make his voice heard; and all that heard him should know that the Duca was his own old peculiar friend.

In Paradise Row the world was decidedly against Roden; and not only were the Demijohns and Duffers against him, but also his own mother and her friend Mrs. Vincent. On the first Monday after Mrs. Roden's return Mrs. Vincent came to the Row as usual,—on this occasion to welcome her cousin, and to hear all the news of the family as it had been at last brought back from Italy. There was a great deal to be told. Many things had been brought to light which had had their commencement in Mrs. Vincent's days. There was something of the continuation of a mild triumph for her in every word that was spoken. She had been against the Di Crinola marriage, when it had been first discussed more than a quarter of a century ago. She had never believed in the Duca di Crinola, and her want of faith had been altogether justified. She did not, after all those years, bear hardly on her friend,—but there was still that well-known tone of gentle censure and of gentle self-applause. "I told you so," said the elder crow to the younger crow. When does the old crow cease to remind the younger crow that it was so? "A sad, sad story," said Mrs. Vincent, shaking her head.

"All our stories I suppose have much in them that is sad. I have got my son, and no mother can have more reason to be proud of a son." Mrs. Vincent shook her head. "I say it is so," repeated the mother; "and having such a son, I will not admit that it has all been sad."

"I wish he were more ready to perform his religious duties," said Mrs. Vincent.

"We cannot all agree about everything. I do not know that that need be brought up now."

"It is a matter that should be brought up every hour

and every day, Mary,—if the bringing of it up is to do any good.”

But it was not on this matter that Mrs. Roden now wished to get assistance from her cousin;—certainly not with any present view towards the amelioration of her son's religious faith. That might come afterwards perhaps. But it was her present object to induce her cousin to agree with her, that her son should permit himself to be called by his father's title. “But you think he should take his father's name?” she asked. Mrs. Vincent shook her head and tried to look wise. The question was one on which her feelings were very much divided. It was of course proper that the son should be called by his father's name. All the proprieties of the world, as known to Mrs. Vincent, declared that it should be so. She was a woman, too, who by no means despised rank, and who considered that much reverence was due to those who were privileged to carry titles. Dukes and lords were certainly very great in her estimation, and even the humblest knight was respected by her, as having been in some degree lifted above the community by the will of his Sovereign. And though she was always in some degree hostile to George Roden, because of the liberties he took in regard to certain religious matters, yet she was good enough and kind enough to wish well to her own cousin. Had there been a question in regard to an English title she certainly would not have shaken her head. But as to this outlandish Italian title, she had her doubts. It did not seem to her to be right that an Englishman should be called a Duca. If it had been Baron, or even Count, the name would have been less offensive. And then to her mind hereditary titles, as she had known them, had been recommended by hereditary possessions. There was something to her almost ir-

religious in the idea of a Duke without an acre. She could therefore only again shake her head. "He has as much right to it," continued Mrs. Roden, "as has the eldest son of the greatest peer in England."

"I dare say he has, my dear, but——"

"But what?"

"I dare say you're right, only—; only it's not just like an English peer, you know."

"The privilege of succession is the same."

"He never could sit in the House of Lords, my dear."

"Of course not. He would assume only what is his own. Why should he be ashamed to take an Italian title any more than his friend Lord Hampstead is to take an English one? It is not as though it would prevent his living here. Many foreign noblemen live in England."

"I suppose he could live here," said Mrs. Vincent as though she were making a great admission. "I don't think that there would be any law to turn him out of the country."

"Nor out of the Post Office, if he chooses to remain there," said Mrs. Roden.

"I don't know how that may be."

"Even if they did, I should prefer that it should be so. According to my thinking, no man should fling away a privilege that is his own, or should be ashamed of assuming a nobility that belongs to him. If not for his own sake, he should do it for the sake of his children. He at any rate has nothing to be ashamed of in the name. It belonged to his father and to his grandfather, and to his ancestors through many generations. Think how men fight for a title in this country; how they struggle for it when there is a doubt as to who may properly have inherited it! Here there is no doubt.

Here there need be no struggle." Convinced by the weight of this argument Mrs. Vincent gave in her adhesion, and at last expressed an opinion that her cousin should at once call himself by his father's name.

CHAPTER XVIII. THE GREAT QUESTION.

NEITHER were the arguments of Mrs. Roden nor the adhesion of Mrs. Vincent of any power in persuading George Roden. He answered his mother gently, kindly, but very firmly. Had anything, he said, been necessary to strengthen his own feeling, it would have been found in his mother's determination to keep his old name. "Surely, mother, if I may say so without disrespect, what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander." At this the mother smiled, kissing her son to show that the argument had been taken in good part. "In this matter," he continued, "we certainly are in a boat together. If I am a Duke you would be a Duchess. If I am doomed to make an ape of myself at the Post Office, you must be equally ridiculous in Paradise Row,—unless you are prepared to go back to Italy and live your life there."

"And you?"

"I could not live there. How could I earn my bread there? How could I pass my days so as to be in any degree useful? What could be more mean? My uncle, though he has been civil, and to a certain degree generous, would be specially anxious not to see me in public life. You and I together would have just means enough for existence. I should be doomed to walk about the streets of some third-rate Italian town, and

call myself by my grand name. Would a life like that satisfy your ambition on my behalf?" Then she thought of the girl who was in love with him, of the friends whom he had made for himself, of the character which belonged to him, and she was driven to confess that, by whatever name he might be called, he must continue to live an Englishman's life, and to live in England. Nevertheless, she told herself that the title would not be abolished, because it might be in abeyance. She might, she thought, still live to hear her son called by the name of which she herself had been proud till she had become thoroughly ashamed of the husband who had given it to her.

But there were others besides Crocker and Mrs. Vincent, and his mother and Sir Boreas, who were much interested by George Roden's condition. Mrs. Roden returned home on the 2nd of March, and, as may be remembered, the tidings respecting her son had reached England before she came. By the end of the month many persons were much exercised as to the young man's future name, and some people of high rank had not only discussed the subject at great length, but had written numerous letters concerning it. It was manifest to Lady Persiflage that no further attempt should now be made to throw obstacles in the way of Lady Frances and her lover. Lady Persiflage had never believed in the obstacles from the first. "Of course they'll marry," she had said to her one daughter, who was now almost as good as married herself, and equally trustworthy. "When a girl is determined like that, of course nothing will stop her. My sister shouldn't have let her meet the young man at first." But this had been said before the young man had turned out to be an Italian Duke. Since the news had come Lady Persiflage had been very eager

in recommending her sister to discontinue the opposition. "Make the most of him," she had said in one of her letters. "It is all that can be done now. It is a fine name, and though Italian titles do not count like ours, yet, when they are as good as this, they go for a good deal. There are real records of the Di Crinola family, and there is no manner of doubt but that he is the head of them. Take him by the hand, and have him down at Trafford if Kingsbury is well enough. They tell me he is quite presentable, with a good figure and all that;—by no means a young man who will stand shivering in a room because he doesn't know how to utter a word. Had he been like that Fanny would never have set her heart upon him. Persiflage has been talking about him, and he says that something will be sure to turn up if he is brought forward properly, and is not ashamed of his family name. Persiflage will do whatever he can, but that can only be if you will open your arms to him." Lady Kingsbury did feel that she was called upon to undergo a terrible revulsion of sentiment. Opening her arms to the Duca di Crinola might be possible to her. But how was she to open her arms to Lady Frances Trafford? The man whom she had seen but once might appear before her with his new title as a young nobleman of whose antecedents she was not bound to remember anything. She might seem to regard him as a new arrival, a noble suitor for her stepdaughter's hand, of whom she had not before heard. But how was she to receive Fanny Trafford, the girl whom she had locked up at Königsgraaf, whose letters she had stopped as they came from the Post Office? Nevertheless she consented,—as far at least as her sister was concerned. "I shall never like Fanny," she had said, "because she is so sly." Girls are always called sly by their friends who

want to abuse them. "But of course I will have them both here, as you think it will be best. What they are to live upon Heaven only knows. But of course that will be no concern of mine."

As a first result of this Lady Persiflage asked George Roden down to Castle Hautboy for the Easter holidays. There was a difficulty about this. How was he to be addressed? Hampstead was consulted, and he, though he was not much in heart just then for the arrangement of such a matter, advised that for the present his friend's old name should be used. Lady Persiflage therefore wrote to—George Roden, Esq., at the General Post Office. In this letter it was signified that Lord Persiflage was very anxious to make the acquaintance of—Mr. Roden. Lady Persiflage was also very anxious. Lady Persiflage explained that she was aware of,—Well! Lady Frances Trafford was to be at Castle Hautboy, and that she thought might act as an inducement to—Mr. Roden. The letter was very cleverly managed. Though it never once mentioned the grand title it made allusions which implied that the real rank of the Post Office clerk was well known to every one at Castle Hautboy. And though nothing of course was said as to any possible relations between Lord Persiflage as a member of the British Cabinet and the clerk's uncle as a member of the Italian Cabinet, nevertheless as to this also there were allusions which were intelligible. This letter was altogether very gracious,—such a one as few young men would be able to resist coming from such a person as Lady Persiflage. But the special offer which prevailed with our Post Office clerk was no doubt the promise of the presence of Fanny Trafford. In all the rest, gracious as the words were, there was nothing but trouble for him. It was clear enough to him that Lady

Persiflage was on the same side as Crocker. Lady Persiflage would no doubt prefer a Duca di Crinola to a Post Office clerk for Lady Frances. And he could see also that the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs was on the same side. The Secretary of State would not have expressed a special desire to see him, the Post Office clerk, at Castle Hautboy, and have, as it were, welcomed him to the possession of his brother-in-law's daughter, had nothing been told of the Duca di Crinola. He heard as much from Lord Hampstead, who advised him to go to Castle Hautboy, and make himself acquainted with Fanny's family friends. It was all manifest. And as it was all being done in opposition to his own firm resolution, he would not have gone,—but that the temptation was too great for him. Fanny Trafford would be there,—and he was quite open to the charm of the offer which was almost being made to him of Lady Fanny's hand. He arranged the matter at the office, and wrote to Lady Persiflage accepting the invitation.

"So you're going to Castle Hautboy?" said Crocker to him. Crocker was in torments at the time. He had been made to understand that he would be doing quite wrong in calling the Duca "Your Grace." Roden, if a Duke at all, could be only an Italian Duke—and not on that account "Your Grace." This had been explained by Bobbin, and had disturbed him. The title "Duca" was still open to him; but he feared Roden's wrath if he should use it too freely.

"How do you know?" asked Roden.

"I have been there myself, you know;—and am in the habit of hearing from Castle Hautboy." His father was agent on the property, and of course he heard tidings, if not from his father, at any rate from his sisters.

"Yes; I am going to Castle Hautboy."

"Hampstead will be there probably. I met Hampstead there. A man in Lord Persiflage's position will, of course, be delighted to welcome the—the—Duca di Crinola." He shrank as though he feared that Roden would strike him—but he uttered the words.

"Of course, if you choose to annoy me, I cannot well help myself," said Roden as he left the room.

On his first arrival at the Castle things were allowed to go quietly with him. Every one called him "Mr. Roden." Lady Persiflage received him very graciously. Lady Frances was in the house, and her name was mentioned to him with the whispered intimacy which on such occasions indicates the triumph of the man's position. She made no allusion either to his rank or to his office, but treated him just as she might have done any other suitor,—which was exactly what he wanted. Lord Llwdytlw had come down for his Easter holidays of two days, and was very civil to him. Lady Amaldina was delighted to make his acquaintance, and within three minutes was calling upon him to promise that he would not get himself married before August in consideration for her bevy. "If I was to lose Fanny now," she said, "I really think I should give it up altogether." Then before dinner he was allowed to find himself alone with Fanny, and for the first time in his life felt that his engagement was an acknowledged thing.

All this was made very pleasant to him by the occasional use of his proper name. He had been almost ashamed of himself because of the embarrassment which his supposed title had occasioned him. He felt that he had thought of the matter more than it was worth. The annoyances of Crocker had been abominable to him.

It was not likely that he should encounter a second Crocker, but still he dreaded he hardly knew what. It certainly was not probable that these people at Castle Hautboy should call him by a name he had never used without consulting him. But still he had dreaded something, and was gratified that the trouble seemed to pass by him easily. Lady Persiflage and Lady Amaldina had both used his legitimate name, and Lord Llwdytlw had called him nothing at all. If he could only be allowed to go away just as he had come, without an allusion from any one to the Di Crinola family, then he should think that the people at Castle Hautboy were very well-bred. But he feared that this was almost too much to hope. He did not see Lord Persiflage till a moment before dinner, when he specially remarked that he was introduced as Mr. Roden. "Very glad to see you, Mr. Roden. I hope you're fond of scenery. We're supposed to have the finest view in England from the top of the tower. I have no doubt my daughter will show it you. I can't say that I ever saw it myself. Beautiful scenery is all very well when you are travelling, but nobody ever cares for it at home." Thus Lord Persiflage had done his courtesy to the stranger, and the conversation became general, as though the stranger were a stranger no longer. When Roden found that he was allowed to give his arm to Lady Frances, and go out and eat his dinner quietly and comfortably without any reference to the peculiarity of his position, he thought that perhaps no further troubles were in store for him.

The whole of the next day was devoted to the charms of love and scenery. The spring weather was delightful, and Roden was allowed to ramble about where he pleased with Lady Frances. Every one about the

place regarded him as an accepted and recognized lover. As he had never been in truth accepted by one of the family except by the girl herself;—as the Marquis had not condescended even to see him when he had come, but had sent Mr. Greenwood to reject him scornfully; as the Marchioness had treated him as below contempt; as even his own friend Lord Hampstead had declared that the difficulties would be insuperable, this sudden cessation of all impediments did seem to be delightfully miraculous. Assent on the part of Lord and Lady Persiflage would, he understood, be quite as serviceable as that of Lord and Lady Kingsbury. Something had occurred which, in the eyes of all the family, had lifted him up as it were out of the gutter and placed him on a grand pedestal. There could be no doubt as to this something. It was all done because he was supposed to be an Italian nobleman. And yet he was not an Italian nobleman; nor would he allow any one to call him so, as far as it might be in his power to prevent it.

His visit was limited to two entire days. One was passed amidst all the sweets of love-making. With the pleasures of that no allusions were allowed to interfere. On the following morning he found himself alone with Lord Persiflage after breakfast. "Delighted to have had you down here, you know," began his lordship. To this Roden simply bowed. "I haven't the pleasure of knowing your uncle personally, but there isn't a man in Europe for whom I have a higher respect." Again Roden bowed. "I've heard all about this romance of yours from D'Ossi. You know D'Ossi?" Roden declared that he had not the honour of knowing the Italian Minister. "Ah; well, you must know D'Ossi, of course. I won't say whether he's your countryman or not, but you must know him. He is your uncle's particular friend."

"It's only by accident that I know my uncle, or even learnt that he was my uncle."

"Just so. But the accident has taken place, and the result fortunately remains. Of course you must take your own name."

"I shall keep the name I have, Lord Persiflage."

"You will find it to be quite impossible. The Queen will not allow it." Upon hearing this Roden opened his eyes; but the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs looked him full in the face as though to assure him that, though he had never heard of such a thing before, such, in fact, was the truth. "Of course there will be difficulties. I'm not prepared at the present moment to advise how this should be done. Perhaps you had better wait till Her Majesty has signified her pleasure to receive you as the Duca di Crinola. When she has done so you will have no alternative."

"No alternative as to what I may call myself?"

"None in the least, I should say. I am thinking now in a great measure as to the welfare of my own relative, Lady Frances. Something will have to be done. I don't quite see my way as yet; but something, no doubt, will be done. The Duca di Crinola will, I have no doubt, find fitting employment." Then a little bell was rung, and Vivian, the private secretary, came into the room. Vivian and Roden knew each other, and a few pleasant words were spoken; but Roden found himself obliged to take his departure without making any further protests in regard to Her Majesty's assumed wishes.

About five o'clock that evening he was invited into a little sitting-room belonging to Lady Persiflage upstairs. "Haven't I been very good to you?" she said, laughing.

"Very good, indeed. Nothing could be so good as inviting me down here to Castle Hautboy."

"That was done for Fanny's sake. But have I said one word to you about your terrible name?"

"No, indeed; and now, Lady Persiflage, pray go on and be good to the end."

"Yes," she said, "I will be good to the end,—before all the people down-stairs. I haven't said a word of it even to Fanny. Fanny is an angel."

"According to my thinking."

"That's of course. But even an angel likes to have her proper rank. You mustn't allow yourself to suppose that even Fanny Trafford is indifferent to titles. There are things that a man may expect a girl to do for him, but there are things which cannot be expected, let her be ever so much in love. Fanny Trafford has got to become Duchess of Crinola."

"I am afraid that that is more than I can do for her."

"My dear Mr. Roden, it must be done. I cannot let you go away from here without making you understand that, as a man engaged to be married, you cannot drop your title. Did you intend to remain single, I cannot say how far your peculiar notions might enable you to prevail; but as you mean to marry, she, too, will have rights. I put it to you whether it would be honest on your part to ask her to abandon the rank which she will be entitled to expect from you. Just you think of it, Mr. Roden. And now I won't trouble you any more upon the subject."

Not a word more was said on the subject at Castle Hautboy, and on the next day he returned to the Post Office.

CHAPTER XIX.

"I CANNOT COMPEL HER."

ABOUT the middle of April Lord and Lady Kingsbury came up to London. From day to day and week to week he had declared that he would never again be able to move out of his room; and had gone on making up his mind to die immediately, till people around him began to think that he was not going to die at all. He was, however, at last persuaded that he might at any rate as well die in London as at Trafford, and, therefore, allowed himself to be carried up to Park Lane. The condition of his own health was, of course, given to him for the reason of this movement. At this peculiar period of the year, it would be better for him, they said, to be near his London doctor. No doubt the Marquis believed that it was so. When a man is ill nothing is so important to him as his own illness. But it may be a question whether the anxiety felt by the Marchioness as to other affairs of the family generally had not an effect with her in inducing her to persuade her husband. The Marquis had given a modified assent to his daughter's marriage; and she, in a manner still more modified, had withdrawn her opposition. Permission had been given to Fanny to marry the Duca di Crinola. This had been given without any reference to money, but had certainly implied a promise of a certain amount of income from the bride's father. How else would it be possible that they should live? The letter had been written to Lady Frances by her stepmother at the dictation of the Marquis. But the words absolutely dictated had not perhaps been religiously followed. The father had intended to be soft and affectionate, merely express-

ing his gratification that his girl's lover should turn out to be the Duca di Crinola. Out of this the Marchioness had made a stipulation. The lover should be received as a lover, on condition that he bore the name and title. Lady Persiflage had told her sister that as a matter of course the name would be taken. "A man always takes his father's name as a matter of course," Lady Persiflage had said. She believed that the man's absurd notions would be overcome by continual social pressure. Whether the social pressure would or would not prevail, the man would certainly marry the girl. There could, therefore, be no better course than that of trusting to social pressure. Lady Persiflage was quite clear as to her course. But the Marchioness, though yielding to her sister in much, still thought that a bargain should be made. It had been suggested that she should invite "the young man" down to Trafford. Roden was usually called "the young man" at present in these family conclaves. She had thought that it would be better to see him up in London. Lady Frances would come to them in Park Lane, and then the young man should be invited. The Marchioness would send her compliments to the "Duca di Crinola." Nothing on earth should induce her to write the name of Roden,—unless it might happily come to pass that the engagement should be broken.

Hampstead at this time was still living at Hendon. His sister remained with him till the Marchioness came up to town about the middle of April, but no one else except George Roden saw much of him. Since Roden's return from Italy his visits to Hendon Hall had been tacitly permitted. The Kingsbury and Persiflage world had taken upon itself to presume that the young man was the Duca di Crinola, and, so presuming, had in truth withdrawn all impediments. Lady Frances had

written to her father in answer to the letter which had reached her from the Marchioness in his name, and had declared that Mr. Roden was Mr. Roden, and would remain Mr. Roden. She had explained his reasons at great length, but had probably made them anything but intelligible to her father. He, however, had simply concealed the letter when he had half-read it. He would not incur the further trouble of explaining this to his wife, and had allowed the matter to go on, although the stipulation made was absolutely repudiated by the parties who were to have been bound by it.

For Roden and Lady Frances this was no doubt very pleasant. Even Lady Amaldina Hauteville with her bevy was not more thoroughly engaged to her aristocratic lover than was Lady Frances to this precarious Italian nobleman. But the brother in these days was by no means as happy as his sister. There had been a terrible scene between him and Lady Frances after his return from Trafford. He came back with Marion's letter in his pocket,—with every word contained in it clear in his memory; but still, still doubting as to the necessity of obeying Marion's orders. She had declared, with whatever force of words she had known how to use, that the marriage which he proposed to himself was impossible. She had told him so more than once before, and the telling had availed nothing. Her first assertion that she could not become his wife had hardly served to moderate in the least the joy which he had felt from the assurances of her affections. It had meant nothing to him. When she had spoken to him simply of their differences of rank he had thrown the arguments under his feet, and had trampled upon them with his masterful imperious determination. His whole life and energy were devoted to the crushing of arguments used towards him by

those who were daily telling him that he was severed from other men by the peculiarities of his rank. He certainly would not be severed from this one woman whom he loved by any such peculiarity. Fortifying his heart by these reflections, he had declared to himself that the timid doubtings of the girl should go for nothing. As she loved him he would of course be strong enough to conquer all such doubtings. He would take her up in his arms and carry her away, and simply tell her that she had got to do it. He had a conviction that a girl when once she had confessed that she loved a man, belonged to the man, and was bound to obey him. To watch over her, to worship her, to hover round her, so that no wind should be allowed to blow too strongly on her, to teach her that she was the one treasure in the world that could be of real value to him,—but at the same time to make a property of her, so that she should be altogether his own,—that had been his idea of the bond which should unite him and Marion Fay together. As she took a joy in his love it could not be but that she would come to his call at last.

She too had perceived something of this,—so much, that it had become necessary to her to tell him the whole truth. Those minor reasons, though even they should have been strong enough, were not, she found, powerful with him. She tried it, and acknowledged to herself that she failed. The man was too wilful for her guidance,—too strong for the arguments by which she had hoped to control him. Then it had been necessary to tell him all the truth. This she had done at last with very few words. "My mother died; and all my brothers and sisters have died. And I also shall die young." Very simple, this had been; but, ah, powerful as it was

simple! In it there had been a hard assertion of facts too strong even for his masterful nature. He could not say, even to himself, that it was not so,—that it should not be so. It might be that she might be spared where others had not been spared. That risk, of course, he was prepared to run. Without turning it much in his thoughts, without venturing to think of the results or to make a calculation, he was prepared to tell her that she too must leave all that in the hand of God, and run her chance as do all human mortal beings. He certainly would so argue the matter with her. But he could not tell her that there was no ground for fear. He could not say that though her mother had died, and though her little brothers and sisters had died, there was yet no cause for fear. And he felt that should she persist in her resolution there would be a potency about her which it might well be that he should fail to dominate. If we can live, let us live together; and if we must die, let us die,—as nearly together as may be. That we should come together is the one thing absolutely essential; and then let us make our way through our troubles as best we may under the hands of Fate. This was what he would now say to her. But he knew that he could not say it with that bright look and those imperious tones which had heretofore almost prevailed with her. Not replying to Marion's letter by any written answer, but resolving that the words which would be necessary might best be spoken, he came back to Hendon. Oh how softly they should be spoken! With his arm round her waist he would tell her that still it should be for better or for worse. "I will say nothing of what may happen except this;—that whatever may befall us we will take it and bear it together." With such words whispered into her ear, would he endeavour to make her under-

stand that though it might all be true, still would her duty be the same.

But when he reached his house, intending to go on almost at once to Holloway, he was stopped by a note from the Quaker.

"My dear young friend," said the note from the Quaker, "I am desired by Marion to tell thee that we have thought it better that she should go for a few weeks to the seaside. I have taken her to Pegwell Bay, whence I can run up daily to my work in the City. After that thou last saw her she was somewhat unwell, — not ill, indeed, but flurried, as was natural, by the interview. And I have taken her down to the seaside in compliance with medical advice. She bids me, however, to tell thee that there is no cause for alarm. It will, however, be better, for a time at least, that she should not be called upon to encounter the excitement of meeting thee.

"Thy very faithful friend,

"ZACHARY FAY.

This made him nervous, and for the moment almost wretched. It was his desire at first to rush off to Pegwell Bay and learn for himself what might be the truth of her condition. But on consideration he felt that he did not dare to do so in opposition to the Quaker's injunction. His arrival there among the strangers of the little watering-place would of course flurry her. He was obliged to abandon that idea, and content himself with a resolve to see the Quaker in the City on the next morning. But the words spoken to him afterwards by his sister were heavier to bear than the Quaker's letter. "Dear John," she had said, "you must give it up."

"I will never give it up," he had answered. And as he spoke there came across his brows an angry look of determination.

"Dear John!"

"What right have you to tell me to give it up? What would you say to me if I were to declare that George Roden should be given up?"

"If there were the same cause!"

"What do you know of any cause?"

"Dear, dearest brother."

"You are taking a part against me. You can be obstinate. I am not more likely to give a thing up than you are yourself."

"It is her health."

"Is she the first young woman that was ever married without being as strong as a milkmaid? Why should you take upon yourself to condemn her?"

"It is not I. It is Marion herself. You told me to go to her, and of course she spoke to me."

He paused a moment, and then in a hoarse, low voice asked a question. "What did she say to you when you spoke to her?"

"Oh, John!—I doubt I can hardly tell you what she said. But you know what she said. Did she not write and tell you that because of her health it cannot be as you would have it."

"And would you have me yield, because for my sake she is afraid? If George Roden were not strong would you throw him over and go away?"

"It is a hard matter to discuss, John."

"But it has to be discussed. It has at any rate to be thought of. I don't think that a woman has a right to take the matter into her own hands, and say that as a certainty God Almighty has condemned her to an early

death. These things must be left to Providence, or Chance, or Fate, as you may call it."

"But if she has her own convictions—?"

"She must not be left to her own convictions. It is just that. She must not be allowed to sacrifice herself to a fantastic idea."

"You will never prevail with her," said his sister, taking him by the arm, and looking up piteously into his face.

"I shall not prevail? Do you say that certainly I shall not prevail?" She was still holding his arm, and still looking up into his face, and now she answered him by slightly shaking her head. "Why should you speak so positively?"

"She could say things to me which she could hardly say to you."

"What was it then?"

"She could say things to me which I can hardly repeat to you. Oh, John, believe me,—believe me. It must be abandoned. Marion Fay will never be your wife." He shook himself free from her hand, and frowned sternly at her. "Do you think I would not have her for my sister, if it were possible? Do you not believe that I too can love her? Who can help loving her?"

He knew, of course, that as the shoe pinched him it could not pinch her. What were any other love or any other sadness as compared to his love or to his sadness? It was to him as though the sun were suddenly taken out of his heaven, as though the light of day were destroyed for ever from before his eyes,—or rather as though a threat were being made that the sun should be taken from his heaven and the light from his eyes,—a threat under which it might be necessary that he should

succumb. "Marion, Marion, Marion," he said to himself again and again, walking up and down between the lodge and the hall door. Whether well or ill, whether living or dying, she surely must be his! "Marion!" And then he was ashamed of himself, as he felt rather than heard that he had absolutely shouted her name aloud.

On the following day he was with the Quaker in London, walking up and down Old Broad Street in front of the entrance leading up to Pogson and Littlebird's. "My dear friend," said the Quaker, "I do not say that it shall never be so. It is in the hands of the Almighty." Hampstead shook his head impatiently. "You do not doubt the power of the Almighty to watch over His creatures?"

"I think that if a man wants a thing he must work for it."

The Quaker looked him hard in the face. "In the ordinary needs of life, my young lord, the maxim is a good one."

"It is good for everything. You tell me of the Almighty. Will the Almighty give me the girl I love if I sit still and hold my peace? Must I not work for that as for anything else?"

"What can I do, Lord Hampstead?"

"Agree with me that it will be better for her to run her chance. Say as I do that it cannot be right that she should condemn herself. If you,—you her father,—will bid her, then she will do it."

"I do not know."

"You can try with her;—if you think it right. You are her father."

"Yes,—I am her father."

"And she is obedient to you. You do not think that she should——? Eh?"

"How am I to say? What am I to say else than that it is in God's hands? I am an old man who have suffered much. All have been taken from me;—all but she. How can I think of thy trouble when my own is so heavy?"

"It is of her that we should think."

"I cannot comfort her; I cannot control her. I will not even attempt to persuade her. She is all that I have. If I did think for a moment that I should like to see my child become the wife of one so high as thou art, that folly has been crushed out of me. To have my child alive would be enough for me now, let alone titles, and high places, and noble palaces."

"Who has thought of them?"

"I did. Not she,—my angel; my white one!" Hampstead shook his head and clenched his fist, shaking it, in utter disregard of the passers by, as the hot, fast tears streamed down his face. Could it be necessary that her name should be mentioned even in connection with feelings such as those which the Quaker owned.

"Thou and I, my lord," continued Zachary Fay, "are in sore trouble about this maiden. I believe that thy love is, as mine, true, honest, and thorough. For her sake I wish I could give her to thee,—because of thy truth and honesty; not because of thy wealth and titles. But she is not mine to give. She is her own,—and will bestow her hand or refuse to do so as her own sense of what is best for thee may direct her. I will say no word to persuade her one way or the other." So speaking the Quaker strode quickly up the gateway, and Lord Hampstead was left to make his way back out of the City as best he might.

CHAPTER XX.

IN PARK LANE.

ON Monday, the 20th of April, Lady Frances returned to her father's roof. The winter had certainly not been a happy time for her. Early in the autumn she had been taken off to the German castle in great disgrace because of her plebeian lover, and had, ever since, been living under so dark a cloud, as to have been considered unfit for the companionship of those little darlings, the young lords, her half-brothers. She had had her way no doubt, never having for a moment wavered in her constancy to the Post Office clerk; but she had been assured incessantly by all her friends that her marriage with the man was impossible, and had no doubt suffered under the conviction that her friends were hostile to her. Now she might be happy. Now she was to be taken back to her father's house. Now she was to keep her lover, and not be held to have been disgraced at all. No doubt in this there was great triumph.

But her triumph had been due altogether to an accident;—to what her father graciously called a romance, while her stepmother described it less civilly as a “marvellous coincidence, for which she ought to thank her stars on her bended knees.” The accident,—or coincidence or romance as it might be called,—was, of course, her lover's title. Of this she was by no means proud, and would not at all thank her stars for it on her bended knees. Though she was happy in her lover's presence, her happiness was clouded by the feeling that she was imposing upon her father. She had been allowed to ask her lover to dine at Kingsbury House

because her lover was supposed to be the Duca di Crinola. But the invitation had been sent under an envelope addressed to George Roden, Esq., General Post Office. No one had yet ventured to inscribe the Duke's name and title on the back of a letter. The Marchioness was assured by her sister that it would all come right, and had, therefore, submitted to have the young man asked to come and eat his dinner under the same roof with her darlings. But she did not quite trust her sister, and felt that after all it might become her imperative duty to gather her children together in her bosom, and fly with them from contact with the Post Office clerk,—the Post Office clerk who would not become a Duke. The Marquis himself was only anxious that everything should be made to be easy. He had, while at Trafford, been so tormented by Mr. Greenwood and his wife that he longed for nothing so much as a reconciliation with his daughter. He was told on very good authority,—on the authority of no less a person than the Secretary of State,—that this young man was the Duca di Crinola. There had been a romance, a very interesting romance; but the fact remained. The Post Office clerk was no longer George Roden, and would, he was assured, soon cease to be a Post Office clerk. The young man was in truth an Italian nobleman of the highest order, and as such was entitled to marry the daughter of an English nobleman. If it should turn out that he had been misinformed, that would not be his fault.

So it was when George Roden came to dine at Kingsbury House. He himself at this moment was not altogether happy. The last words which Lady Persiflage had said to him at Castle Hautboy had disturbed him. "Would it be honest on your part," Lady Persiflage had asked him, "to ask her to abandon the rank which she

will be entitled to expect from you?" He had not put the matter to himself in that light before. Lady Frances was entitled to as much consideration in the matter as was himself. The rank would be as much hers as his. And yet he couldn't do it. Not even for her sake could he walk into the Post Office and call himself the Duca di Crinola. Not even for her sake could he consent to live an idle, useless life as an Italian nobleman. Love was very strong with him, but with it there was a sense of duty and manliness which would make it impossible for him to submit himself to such thralldom. In doing it he would have to throw over all the strong convictions of his life. And yet he was about to sit as a guest at Lord Kingsbury's table, because Lord Kingsbury would believe him to be an Italian nobleman. He was not, therefore, altogether happy when he knocked at the Marquis's door.

Hampstead had refused to join the party. He was not at present in a condition to join any social gathering. But, omitting him, a family party had been collected. Lord and Lady Persiflage were there, with Lady Amaldina and her betrothed. The Persiflages had taken the matter up very strongly, so that they may have been said to have become George Roden's special patrons or protectors. Lord Persiflage, who was seldom much in earnest about anything, had determined that the Duca di Crinola should be recognized, and was supposed already to have spoken a word on the subject in a very high quarter indeed. Vivian, the Private Secretary, was there. The poor Marquis himself was considered unable to come down into the dining-room, but did receive his proposed son-in-law up-stairs. They had not met since the unfortunate visit made by the Post Office clerk to Hendon Hall, when no one had as

yet dreamed of his iniquity; nor had the Marchioness seen him since the terrible sound of that feminine Christian name had wounded her ears. The other persons assembled had in a measure become intimate with him. Lord Llwdytlwlw had walked round Castle Hautboy and discussed with him the statistics of telegraphy. Lady Amaldina had been confidential with him as to her own wedding. Both Lord and Lady Persiflage had given him in a very friendly manner their ideas as to his name and position. Vivian and he had become intimate personal friends. They could, all of them, accept him with open arms when he was shown into the drawing-room, except Lady Kingsbury herself. "No; I am not very well just at present," said the Marquis from his recumbent position as he languidly stretched out his hand. "You won't see me down at dinner. God knows whether anybody will ever see me down at dinner again."

"Not see you down at dinner!" said Lord Persiflage. "In another month you will be talking treason in Pall Mall as you have done all your life."

"I wish you had made Hampstead come with you, Mr. ——" But the Marquis stopped himself, having been instructed that he was not on any account to call the young man Mr. Roden. "He was here this morning, but seemed to be in great trouble about something. He ought to come and take his place at the bottom of the table, seeing how ill I am;—but he won't."

Lady Kingsbury waited until her husband had done his grumbling before she attempted the disagreeable task which was before her. It was very disagreeable. She was a bad hypocrite. There are women who have a special gift of hiding their dislikings from the objects of them, when occasion requires. They can smile and

be soft, with bitter enmity in their hearts, to suit the circumstances of the moment. And as they do so, their faces will overcome their hearts, and their enmity will give way to their smiles. They will become almost friendly because they look friendly. They will cease to hate because hatred is no longer convenient. But the Marchioness was too rigid and too sincere for this. She could command neither her features nor her feelings. It was evident from the moment the young man entered the room, that she would be unable to greet him even with common courtesy. She hated him, and she had told every one there that she hated him. "How do you do?" she said, just touching his hand as soon as he was released from her husband's couch. She, too, had been specially warned by her sister that she must not call the young man by any name. If she could have addressed him by his title, her manner might perhaps have been less austere.

"I am much obliged to you by allowing me to come here," said Roden, looking her full in the face, and making his little speech in such a manner as to be audible to all the room. It was as though he had declared aloud his intention of accepting this permission as conveying much more than a mere invitation to dinner. Her face became harder and more austere than ever. Then finding that she had nothing more to say to him she seated herself and held her peace.

Only that Lady Persiflage was very unlike her sister, the moment would have been awkward for them all. Poor Fanny, who was sitting with her hand within her father's, could not find a word to say on the occasion. Lord Persiflage, turning round upon his heel, made a grimace to his Private Secretary. Llwdythlw would willingly have said something pleasant on the occasion

had he been sufficiently ready. As it was he stood still, with his hands in his trousers pockets and his eyes fixed on the wall opposite. According to his idea the Marchioness was misbehaving herself. "Dear Aunt Clara," said Lady Amaldina, trying to say something that might dissipate the horror of the moment, "have you heard that old Sir Gregory Tollbar is to marry Letitia Tarbarrel at last?" But it was Lady Persiflage who really came to the rescue. "Of course we're all very glad to see you," she said. "You'll find that if you'll be nice to us, we'll all be as nice as possible to you. Won't we, Lord Llwdytlw?"

"As far as I am concerned," said the busy Member of Parliament, "I shall be delighted to make the acquaintance of Mr. Roden." A slight frown, a shade of regret, passed over the face of Lady Persiflage as she heard the name. A darker and bitterer cloud settled itself on Lady Kingsbury's brow. Lord Kingsbury rolled himself uneasily on his couch. Lady Amaldina slightly pinched her lover's arm. Lord Persiflage was almost heard to whistle. Vivian tried to look as if it didn't signify. "I am very much obliged to you for your courtesy, Lord Llwdytlw," said George Roden. To have called him by his name was the greatest favour that could have been done to him at that moment. Then the door was opened and dinner announced.

"Time and the hour run through the roughest day." In this way that dinner at Kingsbury House did come to an end at last. There was a weight of ill-humour about Lady Kingsbury on this special occasion against which even Lady Persiflage found it impossible to prevail. Roden, whose courage rose to the occasion, did make a gallant effort to talk to Lady Frances, who sat next to him. But the circumstances were hard

upon him. Everybody else in the room was closely connected with everybody else. Had he been graciously accepted by the mistress of the house, he could have fallen readily enough into the intimacies which would then have been opened to him. But as it was he was forced to struggle against the stream, and so to struggle as to seem not to struggle. At last, however, time and the hour had done its work, and the ladies went up to the drawing-room.

"Lord Llwdytlw called him Mr. Roden!" This was said by the Marchioness in a tone of bitter reproach as soon as the drawing-room door was closed.

"I was so sorry," said Lady Amaldina.

"It does not signify in the least," said Lady Persiflage. "It cannot be expected that a man should drop his old name and take a new one all in a moment."

"He will never drop his old name and take the new one," said Lady Frances.

"There now," said the Marchioness. "What do you think of that, Geraldine?"

"My dear Fanny," said Lady Persiflage, without a touch of ill-nature in her tone, "how can you tell what a young man will do?"

"I don't think it right to deceive Mamma," said Fanny. "I know him well enough to be quite sure that he will not take the title, as he has no property to support it. He has talked it over with me again and again, and I agree with him altogether."

"Upon my word, Fanny, I didn't think that you would be so foolish," said her aunt. "This is a kind of thing in which a girl should not interfere at all. It must be arranged between the young man's uncle in Italy, and—and the proper authorities here. It must depend very much upon——." Here Lady Persiflage

reduced her words to the very lowest whisper. "Your uncle has told me all about it, and of course he must know better than any one else. It's a kind of thing that must be settled for a man by,—by—by those who know how to settle it. A man can't be this or that just as he pleases."

"Of course not," said Lady Amaldina.

"A man has to take the name, my dear, which he inherits. I could not call myself Mrs. Jones any more than Mrs. Jones can call herself Lady Persiflage. If he is the Duca di Crinola he must be the Duca di Crinola."

"But he won't be Duca di Crinola," said Lady Frances.

"There now!" said the Marchioness.

"If you will only let the matter be settled by those who understand it, and not talk about it just at present, it would be so much better."

"You heard what Lord Llwdythlw called him," said the Marchioness.

"Llwdythlw always was an oaf," said Amaldina.

"He meant to be gracious," said Fanny; "and I am much obliged to him."

"And as to what you were saying, Fanny, as to having nothing to support the title, a foreign title in that way is not like one here at home. Here it must be supported."

"He would never consent to be burdened with a great name without any means," said Fanny.

"There are cases in which a great name will help a man to get means. Whatever he calls himself, I suppose he will have to live, and maintain a wife."

"He has his salary as a clerk in the Post Office," said Fanny very boldly. Amaldina shook her head sadly.

The Marchioness clasped her hands together and raised her eyes to the ceiling with a look of supplication. Were not her darlings to be preserved from such contamination?

"He can do better than that, my dear," exclaimed Lady Persiflage; "and, if you are to be his wife, I am sure that you will not stand in the way of his promotion. His own Government and ours between them will be able to do something for him as Duca di Crinola, whereas nothing could be done for George Roden."

"The English Government is his Government," said Fanny indignantly.

"One would almost suppose that you want to destroy all his prospects," said Lady Persiflage, who was at last hardly able to restrain her anger.

"I believe she does," said the Marchioness.

In the mean time the conversation was carried on below stairs, if with less vigour, yet perhaps with more judgment. Lord Persiflage spoke of Roden's Italian uncle as a man possessing intellectual gifts and political importance of the highest order. Roden could not deny that the Italian Cabinet Minister was his uncle, and was thus driven to acknowledge the family, and almost to acknowledge the country. "From what I hear," said Lord Persiflage, "I suppose you would not wish to reside permanently in Italy, as an Italian?"

"Certainly not," said Roden.

"There is no reason why you should. I can imagine that you should have become too confirmed an Englishman to take kindly to Italian public life as a career. You could hardly do so except as a follower of your uncle, which perhaps would not suit you."

"It would be impossible."

"Just so. D'Ossi was saying to me this morning

that he thought as much. But there is no reason why a career should not be open to you here as well as there;—not political perhaps, but official.”

“It is the only career that at present is open to me.”

“There might be difficulty about Parliament certainly. My advice to you is not to be in a hurry to decide upon anything for a month or two. You will find that things will shake down into their places.” Not a word was said about the name or title. When the gentlemen went up-stairs there had been no brilliancy of conversation, but neither were there any positive difficulties to be incurred. Not a word further was said in reference to “George Roden” or to the “Duca di Crinola.”

CHAPTER XXI.

AFTER ALL HE ISN'T.

SIX weeks passed by, and nothing special had yet been done to arrange George Roden's affairs for him in the manner suggested by Lady Persiflage. “It's a kind of thing that must be settled for a man by, by, by—those who know how to settle it.” That had been her counsel when she was advocating delay. No doubt “things” often do arrange themselves better than men or women can arrange them. Objections which were at first very strong gradually fade away. Ideas which were out of the question become possible. Time quickly renders words and names and even days habitual to us. In this Lady Persiflage had not been unwise. It was quite probable that a young man should become used to a grand name quicker than he had himself expected. But nothing had as yet been done in the right direction when the 1st of June had come.

Attempts had been made towards increasing the young man's self-importance, of which he himself had been hardly aware. Lord Persiflage had seen Sir Boreas Bodkin, and Vivian had seen the private secretary of the Postmaster-General. As the first result of these interviews our clerk was put to sit in a room by himself, and called upon to manage some separate branch of business in which he was free from contact with the Crockers and Bobbins of the Department. It might, it was thought, be possible to call a man a Duke who sat in a separate room, even though he were still a clerk. But, as Sir Boreas had observed, there were places to be given away, Secretaryships, Inspectorships, Surveyorships, and suchlike, into one of which the Duke, if he would consent to be a Duke, might be installed before long. The primary measure of putting him into a room by himself had already been carried out. Then a step was taken, of which George Roden had ground to complain. There was a certain Club in London called the Foreigners, made up half of Englishmen and half of men of other nations, which was supposed to stand very high in the world of fashion. Nearly every member was possessed of either grand titles before his name, or of grand letters after it. Something was said by Vivian to George Roden as to this club. But no actual suggestion was made, and certainly no assent was given. Nevertheless the name of the Duca di Crinola was put down in the Candidate Book, as proposed by Baron d'Ossi and seconded by Lord Persiflage. There it was, so that all the world would declare that the young "Duca" was the "Duca." Otherwise the name would not have been inserted there by the Italian Minister and British Secretary of State. Whereas George Roden himself knew nothing about it. In this way attempts were made to

carry out that line of action which Lady Persiflage had recommended.

Letters, too, were delivered to Roden, addressed to the Duca di Crinola, both at Holloway and at the Post Office. No doubt he refused them when they came. No doubt they generally consisted of tradesmen's circulars, and were probably occasioned by manœuvres of which Lady Persiflage herself was guilty. But they had the effect of spreading abroad the fact that George Roden was George Roden no longer, but was the Duca di Crinola. "There's letters coming for the Duker every day," said the landlady of the Duchess to Mrs. Duffer of Paradise Row. "I see them myself. I shan't stand on any p's and q's. I shall call him Duker to his face." Paradise Row determined generally to call him Duker to his face, and did so frequently, to his great annoyance.

Even his mother began to think that his refusal would be in vain. "I don't see how you're to stand out against it, George. Of course if it wasn't so you'd have to stand out against it; but as it is the fact——"

"It is no more a fact with me than with you," he said angrily.

"Nobody dreams of giving me a title. If all the world agrees, you will have to yield."

Sir Boreas was as urgent. He had always been very friendly with the young clerk, and had now become particularly intimate with him. "Of course, my dear fellow," he said, "I shall be guided entirely by yourself."

"Thank you, sir."

"If you tell me you're George Roden, George Roden you'll be to me. But I think you're wrong. And I think moreover that the good sense of the world will prevail against you. As far as I understand anything of the theory of titles, this title belongs to you. The world

never insists on calling a man a Lord or a Count for nothing. There's too much jealousy for that. But when a thing is so, people choose that it shall be so."

All this troubled him, though it did not shake his convictions. But it made him think again and again of what Lady Persiflage had said to him down at Castle Hautboy. "Will it be honest on your part to ask her to abandon the rank which she will be entitled to expect from you?" If all the world conspired to tell him that he was entitled to take this name, then the girl whom he intended to marry would certainly be justified in claiming it. It undoubtedly was the fact that titles such as these were dear to men,—and specially dear to women. As to this girl, who was so true to him, was he justified in supposing that she would be different from others, simply because she was true to him? He had asked her to come down as it were from the high pedestal of her own rank, and to submit herself to his lowly lot. She had consented, and there never had been to him a moment of remorse in thinking that he was about to injure her. But as Chance had brought it about in this way, as Fortune had seemed determined to give back to her that of which he would have deprived her, was it right that he should stand in the way of Fortune? Would it be honest on his part to ask her to abandon these fine names which Chance was putting in her way?

That it might be so, should he be pleased to accept what was offered to him, did become manifest to him. It was within his power to call himself and to have himself called by this new name. It was not only the party of the Crockers. Others now were urgent in persuading him. The matter had become so far customary to him as to make him feel that if he would

simply put the name on his card, and cause it to be inserted in the Directories, and write a line to the officials saying that for the future he would wish to be so designated, the thing would be done. He had met Baron D'Ossi, and the Baron had acknowledged that an Englishman could not be converted into an Italian Duke without his own consent,—but had used very strong arguments to show that in this case the Englishman ought to give his consent. The Baron had expressed his own opinion that the Signorina would be very much ill-used indeed if she were not allowed to take her place among the Duchessinas. His own personal feelings were in no degree mitigated. To be a Post Office clerk, living at Holloway, with a few hundreds a-year to spend,—and yet to be known all over the world as the claimant of a magnificently grand title! It seemed as though a cruel fate had determined to crush him with a terrible punishment because of his specially democratic views! That he of all the world should be selected to be a Duke in opposition to his own wishes! How often had he been heard to declare that all hereditary titles were, of their very nature, absurd! And yet he was to be forced to become a penniless hereditary Duke!

Nevertheless he would not rob her whom he hoped to make his wife of that which would of right belong to her. "Fanny," he said to her one day, "you cannot conceive how many people are troubling me about this title."

"I know they are troubling me. But I would not mind any of them;—only for papa."

"Is he very anxious about it?"

"I am afraid he is."

"Have I ever told you what your aunt said to me just before I left Castle Hautboy?"

"Lady Persiflage, you mean. She is not my aunt, you know."

"She is more anxious than your father, and certainly uses the only strong argument I have heard."

"Has she persuaded you?"

"I cannot say that; but she has done something towards persuading me. She has made me half think that it may be my duty."

"Then I suppose you will take the name," she said.

"It shall depend entirely upon you. And yet I ought not to ask you. I ought to do as these people bid me without even troubling you for an expression of your wish. I do believe that when you become my wife, you will have as complete a right to the title as has Lady Kingsbury to hers. Shall it be so?"

"No," she said.

"It shall not?"

"Certainly, no; if it be left to me."

"Why do you answer in that way when all your friends desire it?"

"Because I believe that there is one friend who does not desire it. If you can say that you wish it on your own account, of course I will yield. Otherwise all that my friends may say on the matter can have no effect on me. When I accepted the offer which you made me, I gave up all idea of rank. I had my reasons, which I thought to be strong enough. At any rate I did so, and now because of this accident I will not be weak enough to go back. As to what Lady Persiflage says about me, do not believe a word of it. You certainly will not make me happy by bestowing on me a name which you do not wish me to bear, and which will be distasteful to yourself."

After this there was no longer any hesitation on

Roden's part, though his friends, including Lord Persiflage, the Baron, Sir Boreas, and Crocker, were as active in their endeavours as ever. For some days he had doubted, but now he doubted no longer. They might address to him what letters they would, they might call him by what nickname they pleased, they might write him down in what book they chose, he would still keep the name of George Roden, as she had protested that she was satisfied with it.

It was through Sir Boreas that he learnt that his name had been written down in the club Candidate Book as "Duca di Crinola." Sir Boreas was not a member of the club, but had heard what had been done, probably at some club of which he was a member. "I am glad to hear that you are coming up at the Foreigners," said Acolus.

"But I am not."

"I was told last night that Baron D'Ossi had put your name down as Duca di Crinola." Then Roden discovered the whole truth,—how the Baron had proposed him and the Foreign Secretary had seconded him, without even going through the ceremony of asking him. "Upon my word I understood that you wished it," Vivian said to him. Upon this the following note was written to the Foreign Secretary.

"Mr. Roden presents his compliments to Lord Persiflage, and begs to explain that there has been a misunderstanding about the Foreigners' Club. Mr. Roden feels very much the honour that has been done him, and is much obliged to Lord Persiflage; but as he feels himself not entitled to the honour of belonging to the club, he will be glad that his name should be taken off. Mr. Roden takes the opportunity of assuring Lord

Persiflage that he does not and never will claim the name which he understands to have been inscribed in the club books."

"He's a confounded ass," said Lord Persiflage to the Baron as he did as he was bid at the club. The Baron shrugged his shoulders, as though acknowledging that his young fellow-nobleman certainly was an ass. "There are men, Baron, whom you can't help, let you struggle ever so much. This man has had stuff enough in him to win for himself a very pretty girl with a good fortune and high rank, and yet he is such a fool that he won't let me put him altogether on his legs when the opportunity comes!"

Not long after this Roden called at the house in Park Lane, and asked to see the Marquis. As he passed through the hall he met Mr. Greenwood coming very slowly down the stairs. The last time he had met the gentleman had been in that very house when the gentleman had received him on behalf of the Marquis. The Marquis had not condescended to see him, but had deputed his chaplain to give him whatever ignominious answer might be necessary to his audacious demand for the hand of Lady Frances. On that occasion Mr. Greenwood had been very imperious. Mr. Greenwood had taken upon himself almost the manners of the master of the house. Mr. Greenwood had crowed as though the dunghill had been his own. George Roden even then had not been abashed, having been able to remember through the interview that the young lady was on his side; but he had certainly been severely treated. He had wondered at the moment that such a man as Lord Kingsbury should confide so much of his family matters to such a man as Mr. Greenwood. Since then he had

heard something of Mr. Greenwood's latter history from Lady Frances. Lady Frances had joined with her brother in disliking Mr. Greenwood, and all that Hampstead had said to her had been passed on to her lover. Since that last interview the position of the two men had been changed. The chaplain had been turned out of the establishment, and George Roden had been almost accepted into it as a son-in-law. As they met on the foot of the staircase, it was necessary that there should be some greeting. The Post Office clerk bowed very graciously, but Mr. Greenwood barely acknowledged the salutation. "There," said he to himself, as he passed on, "that's the young man that's done all the mischief. It's because such as he are allowed to make their way in among noblemen and gentlemen that England is going to the dogs." Nevertheless, when Mr. Greenwood had first consented to be an inmate of the present Lord Kingsbury's house, Lord Kingsbury had, in spite of his Order, entertained very liberal views.

The Marquis was not in a good humour when Roden was shown into his room. He had been troubled by his late chaplain, and he was not able to bear such troubles easily. Mr. Greenwood had said words to him which had vexed him sorely, and these words had in part referred to his daughter and his daughter's lover. "No, I'm not very well," he said in answer to Roden's inquiries. "I don't think I ever shall be better. What is it about now?"

"I have come, my lord," said Roden, "because I do not like to be here in your house under a false pretence."

"A false pretence? What false pretence? I hate false pretences."

"So do I."

"What do you mean by a false pretence now?"

"I fear that they have told you, Lord Kingsbury, that should you give me your daughter as my wife, you will give her to the Duca di Crinola." The Marquis, who was sitting in his arm-chair, shook his head from side to side, and moved his hands uneasily, but made no immediate reply. "I cannot quite tell, my lord, what your own ideas are, because we have never discussed the subject."

"I don't want to discuss it just at present," said the Marquis.

"But it is right that you should know that I do not claim the title, and never shall claim it. Others have done so on my behalf, but with no authority from me. I have no means to support the rank in the country to which it belongs; nor as an Englishman am I entitled to assume it here."

"I don't know that you're an Englishman," said the Marquis. "People tell me that you're an Italian."

"I have been brought up as an Englishman, and have lived as one for five-and-twenty years. I think it would be difficult now to rob me of my rights. Nobody, I fancy, will try. I am, and shall be, George Roden, as I always have been. I should not, of course, trouble you with the matter were it not that I am a suitor for your daughter's hand. Am I right in supposing that I have been accepted here by you in that light?" This was a question which the Marquis was not prepared to answer at the moment. No doubt the young man had been accepted. Lady Frances had been allowed to go down to Castle Hautboy to meet him as her lover. All the family had been collected to welcome him at the London mansion. The newspapers had been full of mysterious paragraphs in which the future happy bridegroom was sometimes spoken of as an Italian Duke and

sometimes as an English Post Office clerk. "Of course he must marry her now," the Marquis had said to his wife, with much anger. "It's all your sister's doing," he had said to her again. He had in a soft moment given his affectionate blessing to his daughter in special reference to her engagement. He knew that he couldn't go back from it now, and had it been possible, would have been most unwilling to give his wife such a triumph. But yet he was not prepared to accept the Post Office clerk simply as a Post Office clerk. "I am sorry to trouble you at this moment, Lord Kingsbury, if you are not well."

"I ain't well at all. I am very far from well. If you don't mind I'd rather not talk about it just at present. When I can see Hampstead, then, perhaps, things can be settled." As there was nothing further to be said George Roden took his leave.

CHAPTER XXII.

"OF COURSE THERE WAS A BITTERNESS."

It was not surprising that Lord Kingsbury should have been unhappy when Roden was shown up into his room, as Mr. Greenwood had been with him. Mr. Greenwood had called on the previous day, and had been refused admittance. He had then sent in an appeal, asking so piteously for an interview that the Marquis had been unable to repudiate it. Mr. Greenwood knew enough of letter-writing to be able to be effective on such an occasion. He had, he said, lived under the same roof with the Marquis for a quarter of a century. Though the positions of the two men in the world were so different they had lived together as friends. The

Marquis throughout that long period had frequently condescended to ask the advice of his chaplain, and not unfrequently to follow it. After all this could he refuse to grant the favour of a last interview? He had found himself unable to refuse the favour. The interview had taken place, and consequently the Marquis had been very unhappy when George Roden was shown up into his room.

The Rector of Appleslocombe was dead. The interview was commenced by a communication to that effect from Mr. Greenwood. The Marquis of course knew the fact,—had indeed already given the living away,—had not delayed a minute in giving it away because of some fear which still pressed upon him in reference to Mr. Greenwood. Nor did Mr. Greenwood expect to get the living,—or perhaps desire it. But he wished to have a grievance, and to be in possession of a subject on which he could begin to make his complaint. "You must have known, Mr. Greenwood, that I never intended it for you," said the Marquis. Mr. Greenwood, seated on the edge of his chair and rubbing his two hands together, declared that he had entertained hopes in that direction. "I don't know why you should, then. I never told you so. I never thought of it for a moment. I always meant to put a young man into it;—comparatively young." Mr. Greenwood shook his head and still rubbed his hands. "I don't know that I can do anything more for you."

"It isn't much that you have done, certainly, Lord Kingsbury."

"I have done as much as I intend to do," said the Marquis, rousing himself angrily. "I have explained all that by Mr. Roberts."

"Two hundred a year after a quarter of a century!" Mr. Greenwood had in truth been put into possession of

three hundred a year; but as one hundred of this came from Lord Hampstead it was not necessary to mention the little addition.

"It is very wrong,—your pressing your way in here and talking to me about it at all."

"After having expected the living for so many years!"

"You had no right to expect it. I didn't promise it. I never thought of it for a moment. When you asked me I told you that it was out of the question. I never heard of such impertinence in all my life. I must ask you to go away and leave me, Mr. Greenwood." But Mr. Greenwood was not disposed to go away just yet. He had come there for a purpose, and he intended to go on with it. He was clearly resolved not to be frightened by the Marquis. He got up from his chair and stood looking at the Marquis, still rubbing his hands, till the sick man was almost frightened by the persistency of his silence. "What is it, Mr. Greenwood, that makes you stand thus? Do you not hear me tell you that I have got nothing more to say to you?"

"Yes, my lord; I hear what you say?"

"Then why don't you go away? I won't have you stand there staring like that." He still shook his head. "Why do you stand there and shake your head?"

"It must be told, my lord."

"What must be told?"

"The Marchioness!"

"What do you mean, sir? What have you got to say?"

"Would you wish to send for her ladyship?"

"No; I wouldn't. I won't send for her ladyship at all. What has her ladyship got to do with it?"

"She promised."

"Promised what?"

"Promised the living! She undertook that I should have Appleslocombe the moment it became vacant."

"I don't believe a word of it."

"She did. I don't think that her ladyship will deny it." It might have been so, certainly; and had there been no chance of truth in the statement he would hardly have been so ready to send for Lady Kingsbury. But had she done so the promise would amount to nothing. Though he was sick and wretched and weak, and in some matters afraid of his wife, there had been no moment of his life in which he would have given way to her on such a subject as this. "She promised it me,—for a purpose."

"A purpose!"

"For a purpose, my lord."

"What purpose?" Mr. Greenwood went on staring and shaking his head and rubbing his hands, till the Marquis, awestruck and almost frightened, put out his hand towards the bell. But he thought of it again. He remembered himself that he had nothing to fear. If the man had anything to say about the Marchioness it might perhaps be better said without the presence of servants. "If you mean to say anything, say it. If not,—go. If you do neither one nor the other very quickly, I shall have you turned out of the house."

"Turned out of the house?"

"Certainly. If you have any threat to make, you had better make it in writing. You can write to my lawyers, or to me, or to Lord Hampstead, or to Mr. Roberts."

"It isn't a threat. It is only a statement. She promised it me,—for a purpose."

"I don't know what you mean by a purpose, Mr.

Greenwood. I don't believe Lady Kingsbury made any such promise; but if she did it wasn't hers to promise. I don't believe it; but had she promised I should not be bound by it."

"Not if you have not given it away?"

"I have given it away, Mr. Greenwood."

"Then I must suggest——"

"Suggest what!"

"Compensation, my lord. It will only be fair. You ask her ladyship. Her ladyship cannot intend that I should be turned out of your lordship's house with only two hundred a year, after what has passed between me and her ladyship."

"What passed?" said the Marquis, absolutely rousing himself so as to stand erect before the other man.

"I had rather, my lord, you should hear it from her ladyship."

"What passed?"

"There was all that about Lady Frances."

"What about Lady Frances?"

"Of course I was employed to do all that I could to prevent the marriage. You employed me yourself, my lord. It was you sent me down to see the young man, and explain to him how impertinent he was. It isn't my fault, Lord Kingsbury, if things have got themselves changed since then."

"You think you ought to make a demand upon me because as my Chaplain you were asked to see a gentleman who called here on a delicate matter?"

"It isn't that I am thinking about. If it had been only that I should have said nothing. You asked me what it was about, and I was obliged to remind you of one thing. What took place between me and her ladyship was, of course, much more particular; but it all

began with your lordship. If you hadn't commissioned me I don't suppose her ladyship would ever have spoken to me about Lady Frances."

"What is it all? Sit down;—won't you?—and tell it all like a man if you have got anything to tell." The Marquis, fatigued with his exertion, was forced to go back to his chair. Mr. Greenwood also sat down,—but whether or no like a man may be doubted. "Remember this, Mr. Greenwood, it does not become a gentleman to repeat what has been said to him in confidence,—especially not to repeat it to him or to them from whom it was intended to be kept secret. And it does not become a Christian to endeavour to make ill-blood between a husband and his wife. Now, if you have got anything to say, say it." Mr. Greenwood shook his head. "If you have got nothing to say, go away. I tell you fairly that I don't want to have you here. You have begun something like a threat, and if you choose to go on with it, you may. I am not afraid to hear you, but you must say it or go."

Mr. Greenwood again shook his head. "I suppose you won't deny that her ladyship honoured me with a very close confidence."

"I don't know anything about it."

"Your lordship didn't know that her ladyship down at Trafford used to be talking to me pretty freely about Lord Hampstead and Lady Frances?"

"If you have got anything to say, say it," screamed the Marquis.

"Of course his lordship and her ladyship are not her ladyship's own children."

"What has that got to do with it?"

"Of course there was a bitterness."

"What is that to you? I will hear nothing from you

about Lady Kingsbury, unless you have to tell me of some claim to be made upon her. If there has been money promised you, and she acknowledges it, it shall be paid. Has there been any such promise?"

Mr. Greenwood found it very difficult,—nay, quite impossible,—to say in accurate language that which he was desirous of explaining by dark hints. There had, he thought, been something of a compact between himself and the Marchioness. The Marchioness had desired something which she ought not to have desired, and had called upon the Chaplain for more than his sympathy. The Chaplain had been willing to give her more than his sympathy,—had at one time been almost willing to give her very much more. He might possibly, as he now felt, have misinterpreted her wishes. But he had certainly heard from her language so strong, in reference to her husband's children, that he had been justified in considering that it was intended to be secret. As a consequence of this he had been compelled to choose between the Marquis and the Marchioness. By becoming the confidential friend of the one he had necessarily become the enemy of the other. Then, as a further consequence, he was turned out of the house,—and, as he declared to himself, utterly ruined. Now in this there had certainly been much hardship, and who was to compensate him if not the Marquis?

There certainly had been some talk about Appleslocombe during those moments of hot passion in which Lady Kingsbury had allowed herself to say such evil things of Lady Frances and Lord Hampstead. Whether any absolute promise had been given she would probably not now remember. There certainly had been a moment in which she had thought that her husband's life might possibly pass away before that of the old rector;

and reference may have been made to the fact that had her own darling been the heir, the gift of the living would then have fallen into her own hands. Mr. Greenwood had probably thought more of some possible compensation for the living than of the living itself. He had no doubt endeavoured to frighten her ladyship into thinking that some mysterious debt was due to him, if not for services actually rendered, at any rate for extraordinary confidences. But before he had forced upon her the acknowledgment of the debt, he was turned out of the house! Now this he felt to be hard.

What were two hundred a-year as a pension for a gentleman after such a life-long service? Was it to be endured that he should have listened for so many years to all the abominable politics of the Marquis, and to the anger and disappointment of the Marchioness, that he should have been so closely connected, and for so many years, with luxury, wealth, and rank, and then arrive at so poor an evening of his day? As he thought of this he felt the more ashamed of his misfortune, because he believed himself to be in all respects a stronger man than the Marquis. He had flattered himself that he could lead the Marquis, and had thought that he had been fairly successful in doing so. His life had been idle, luxurious, and full of comfort. The Marquis had allowed him to do pretty well what he pleased until in an evil hour he had taken the side of the Marchioness in a family quarrel. Then the Marquis, though weak in health,—almost to his death,—had suddenly become strong in purpose, and had turned him abruptly out of the house with a miserable stipend hardly fit for more than a butler! Could it be that he should put up with such usage, and allow the Marquis to escape unscathed out of his hand?

In this condition of mind, he had determined that he owed it to himself to do or say something that should frighten his lordship into a more generous final arrangement. There had been, he said to himself again and again, such a confidence with a lady of so high a rank, that the owner of it ought not to be allowed to languish upon two or even upon three hundred a-year. If the whole thing could really be explained to the Marquis, the Marquis would probably see it himself. And to all this was to be added the fact that no harm had been done. The Marchioness owed him very much for having wished to assist her in getting rid of an heir that was disagreeable to her. The Marquis owed him more for not having done it. And they both owed him very much in that he had never said a word of it all to anybody else. He had thought that he might be clever enough to make the Marquis understand something of this without actually explaining it. That some mysterious promise had been made, and that, as the promise could not be kept, some compensation should be awarded, — this was what he had desired to bring home to the mind of the Marquis. He had betrayed no confidence. He intended to betray none. He was very anxious that the Marquis should be aware, that as he, Mr. Greenwood, was a gentleman, all confidences would be safe in his hands; but then the Marquis ought to do his part of the business, and not turn his confidential Chaplain out of the house after a quarter of a century with a beggarly annuity of two hundred a-year!

But the Marquis seemed to have acquired unusual strength of character; and Mr. Greenwood found that words were very difficult to be found. He had declared that there had been "a bitterness," and beyond that he could not go. It was impossible to hint that her lady-

ship had wished to have Lord Hampstead—removed. The horrid thoughts of a few days had become so vague to himself that he doubted whether there had been any real intention as to the young lord's removal even in his own mind. There was nothing more that he could say than this,—that during the period of this close intimacy her ladyship had promised to him the living of Applescombe, and that, as that promise could not be kept, some compensation should be made to him. "Was any sum of money named?" asked the Marquis.

"Nothing of the kind. Her ladyship thought that I ought to have the living."

"You can't have it; and there's an end of it."

"And you think that nothing should be done for me?"

"I think that nothing should be done for you more than has been done."

"Very well. I am not going to tell secrets that have been intrusted to me as a gentleman, even though I am so badly used by those who have confided them to me. Her ladyship is safe with me. Because I sympathized with her ladyship your lordship turned me out of the house."

"No; I didn't."

"Should I have been treated like this had I not taken her ladyship's part? I am too noble to betray a secret, or, no doubt, I could compel your lordship to behave to me in a very different manner. Yes, my lord, I am quite ready to go now. I have made my appeal, and I have made it in vain. I have no wish to call upon her ladyship. As a gentleman I am bound to give her ladyship no unnecessary trouble."

While this last speech was going on a servant had come into the room, and had told the Marquis that the "Duca di Crinola" was desirous of seeing him. The

servants in the establishment were of course anxious to recognize Lady Frances' lover as an Italian Duke. The Marquis would probably have made some excuse for not receiving the lover at this moment, had he not felt that he might in this way best insure the immediate retreat of Mr. Greenwood. Mr. Greenwood went, and Roden was summoned to Lord Kingsbury's presence; but the meeting took place under circumstances which naturally made the Marquis incapable of entering at the moment with much spirit on the great "Duca" question.

CHAPTER XXIII.

LORD HAMPSTEAD AGAIN WITH MRS. RODEN.

WEEKS had passed by since Lord Hampstead had walked up and down Broad Street with Mr. Fay,—weeks which were to him a period of terrible woe. His passion for Marion had so seized upon him, that it had in all respects changed his life. The sorrow of her alleged ill-health had fallen upon him before the hunting had been over, but from that moment he had altogether forgotten his horses. The time had now come in which he was wont to be on board his yacht, but of his yacht he took no notice whatever. "I can tell you nothing about it as yet," he said in the only line which he wrote to his skipper in answer to piteous applications made to him. None of those who were near and dear to him knew how he passed his time. His sister left him and went up to the house in London, and he felt that her going was a relief to him. He would not even admit his friend Roden to come to him in his trouble. He spent his days all alone at Hendon, occasionally going across to Holloway in order that he might talk of his sorrow to

Mrs. Roden. Midsummer had come upon him before he again saw the Quaker. Marion's father had left a feeling almost of hostility in his mind in consequence of that conversation in Broad Street. "I no longer want anything on your behalf," the Quaker had seemed to say. "I care nothing now for your name, or your happiness. I am anxious only for my child, and as I am told that it will be better that you should not see her, you must stay away." That the father should be anxious for his daughter was natural enough. Lord Hampstead could not quarrel with Zachary Fay. But he taught himself to think that their interests were at variance with each other. As for Marion, whether she were ill or whether she were well, he would have had her altogether to himself.

Gradually there had come upon him the conviction that there was a real barrier existing between himself and the thing that he desired. To Marion's own words, while they had been spoken only to himself, he had given no absolute credit. He had been able to declare to her that her fears were vain, and that whether she were weak or whether she were strong, it was her duty to come to him. When they two had been together his arguments and assurances had convinced at any rate himself. The love which he had seen in her eyes and had heard from her lips had been so sweet to him, that their savour had overcome whatever strength her words possessed. But these protestations, these assurances that no marriage could be possible, when they reached him second-hand, as they had done through his sister and through the Quaker, almost crushed him. He did not dare to tell them that he would fain marry the girl though she were dying,—that he would accept any chance or no chance, if he might only be allowed to

hold her in his arms, and tell her that she was all his own. There had come a blow, he would say to himself, again and again, as he walked about the grounds at Hendon, there had come a blow, a fatal blow, a blow from which there could be no recovery,—but, still, it should, it ought, to be borne together. He would not admit to himself that because of this verdict there ought to be a separation between them two. It might be that the verdict had been uttered by a Judge against whom there could be no appeal; but even the Judge should not be allowed to say that Marion Fay was not his own. Let her come and die in his arms if she must die. Let her come and have what of life there might be left to her, warmed and comforted and perhaps extended by his love. It seemed to him to be certainly a fact, that because of his great love, and of hers, she did already belong to him; and yet he was told that he might not see her;—that it would be better that she should not be disturbed by his presence,—as though he were no more than a stranger to her. Every day he almost resolved to disregard them, and go down to the little cottage in which she was living. But then he remembered the warnings which were given to him, and was aware that he had in truth no right to intrude upon the Quaker's household. It is not to be supposed that during this time he had no intercourse with Marion. At first there came to be a few lines, written perhaps once a week from her, in answer to many lines written by him; but by degrees the feeling of awe which at first attached itself to the act of writing to him wore off, and she did not let a day pass without sending him some little record of herself and her doings. It had come to be quite understood by the Quaker that Marion was to do exactly as she pleased with her lover. No one dreamed of

hinting to her that this correspondence was improper or injurious. Had she herself expressed a wish to see him, neither would the Quaker nor Mrs. Roden have made strong objection. To whatever might have been her wish or her decision they would have acceded. It was by her word that the marriage had been declared to be impossible. It was in obedience to her that he was to keep aloof. She had failed to prevail with her own soft words, and had therefore been driven to use the authority of others.

But at this period, though she did become weaker and weaker from day to day, and though the doctor's attendance was constant at the cottage, Marion herself was hardly unhappy. She grieved indeed for his grief; but, only for that, there would have been triumph and joy to her rather than grief. The daily writing of these little notes was a privilege to her and a happiness, of which she had hitherto known nothing. To have a lover, and such a lover, was a delight to her, a delight to which there was now hardly any drawback, as there was nothing now of which she need be afraid. To have him with her as other girls may have their lovers, she knew was impossible to her. But to read his words, and to write loving words to him, to talk to him of his future life, and bid him think of her, his poor Marion, without allowing his great manly heart to be filled too full with vain memories, was in truth happiness to her. "Why should you want to come?" she said. "It is infinitely better that you should not come. We understand it all now, and acknowledge what it is that the Lord has done for us. It would not have been good for me to be your wife. It would not have been good for you to have become my husband. But it will I think be good for me to have loved you; and if you will learn to think of it

as I do, it will not have been bad for you. It has given a beauty to my life," she said, "which makes me feel that I ought to be contented to die early. If I could have had a choice I would have chosen it so."

But these teachings from her had no effect whatever upon him. It was her idea that she would pass away, and that there would remain with him no more than a fair sweet shade which would have but little effect upon his future life beyond that of creating for him occasionally a gentle melancholy. It could not be, she thought, that for a man such as he,—for one so powerful and so great,—such a memory should cause a lasting sorrow. But with him, to his thinking, to his feeling, the lasting biting sorrow was there already. There could be no other love, no other marriage, no other Marion. He had heard that his stepmother was anxious for her boy. The way should be open for the child. It did seem to him that a life, long continued, would be impossible to him when Marion should have been taken away from him.

"Oh yes;—he's there again," said Miss Demijohn to her aunt. "He comes mostly on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. What he can be coming about is more than I can guess. Crocker says it's all true love. Crocker says that the Duca says——"

"Bother the Duca," exclaimed the old woman. "I don't believe that Crocker and George Roden ever exchange a word together."

"Why shouldn't they exchange words, and they fast friends of five years' standing? Crocker says as Lord Hampstead is to be at Lady Amaldina's wedding in August. His lordship has promised. And Crocker thinks——"

"I don't believe very much about Crocker, my young woman. You had better look to yourself, or, perhaps,

you'll find when you have got yourself married that Crocker has not got a roof to cover you."

Lord Hampstead had walked over to Paradise Row, and was seated with Mrs. Roden when this little squabble was going on. "You don't think that I ought to let things remain as they are," he said to Mrs. Roden. To all such questions Mrs. Roden found it very difficult to make any reply. She did in truth think that they ought to be allowed to remain as they were,—or rather that some severance should be made more decided even than that which now existed. Putting aside her own ideas, she was quite sure that Marion would not consent to a marriage. And, as it was so, and must be so, it was better, she thought, that the young people should see no more of each other. This writing of daily letters,—what good could it do to either of them? To her indeed, to Marion, with her fixed purpose, and settled religious convictions, and almost certain fate, little evil might be done. But to Lord Hampstead the result would be, and was, terribly pernicious. He was sacrificing himself, not only as Mrs. Roden thought for the present moment, but for many years perhaps,—perhaps for his future life,—to a hopeless passion. A cloud was falling upon him which might too probably darken his whole career. From the day on which she had unfortunately taken Marion to Hendon Hall, she had never ceased to regret the acquaintance which she had caused. To her thinking the whole affair had been unfortunate. Between people so divided there should have been no intimacy, and yet this intimacy had been due to her. "It is impossible that I should not see her," continued Lord Hampstead. "I will see her."

"If you would see her, and then make up your mind to part with her,—that I think would be good."

"To see her, and say farewell to her for ever?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Certainly not. That I will never do. If it should come to pass that she must go from me for ever, I would have her in my arms to the very last!"

"At such a moment, my lord, those whom nature has given to her for her friends——"

"Has not nature given me too for her friend? Can any friend love her more truly than I do? Those should be with us when we die to whom our life is of most importance. Is there any one to whom her life can be half as much as it is to me? The husband is the dearest to his wife. When I look upon her as going from me for ever, then may I not say that she is the same to me as my wife."

"Why,—why,—why?"

"I know what you mean, Mrs. Roden. What is the use of asking 'why' when the thing is done? Could I make it so now, as though I had never seen her? Could I if I would? Would I if I could? What is the good of thinking of antecedents which are impossible? She has become my treasure. Whether past and fleeting, or likely to last me for my life, she is my treasure. Can I make a change because you ask why,—and why,—and why? Why did I ever come here? Why did I know your son? Why have I got a something here within me which kills me when I think that I shall be separated from her, and yet crowns me with glory when I feel that she has loved me. If she must leave me, I have to bear it. What I shall do, where I shall go, whether I shall stand or fall, I do not pretend to say. A man does not know, himself, of what stuff he is made, till he has been tried. But whatever may be my lot, it cannot be altered by any care or custody now. She is my own, and I will not be

separated from her. If she were dead, I should know that she was gone. She would have left me, and I could not help myself. As yet she is living, and may live, and I will be with her. I must go to her there, or she must come here to me. If he will permit it I will take some home for myself close to hers. What will it matter now, though every one should know it? Let them all know it. Should she live she will become mine. If she must go,—what will the world know but that I have lost her who was to have been my wife?"

Even Mrs. Roden had not the heart to tell him that he had seen Marion for the last time. It would have been useless to tell him so, for he would not have obeyed the behest contained in such an assertion. Ideas of prudence and ideas of health had restrained him hitherto,—but he had been restrained only for a time. No one had dared suggest to him that he should never again see his Marion. "I suppose that we must ask Mr. Fay," she replied. She was herself more powerful than the Quaker, as she was well aware; but it had become necessary to her to say something.

"Mr. Fay has less to say to it even than I have," said Hampstead. "My belief is that Marion herself is the only one among us who is strong. If it were not that she is determined, he would yield and you would yield."

"Who can know as she knows?" said Mrs. Roden. "Which among us is so likely to be guided by what is right? Which is so pure, and honest, and loving? Her conscience tells her what is best."

"I am not sure of that," said he. "Her conscience may fill her as well as another with fears that are unnecessary. I cannot think that a girl should be encouraged by those around her to doom herself after this fashion. Who has a right to say that God has deter-

mined that she shall die early?" Mrs. Roden shook her head. "I am not going to teach others what religion demands, but to me it seems that we should leave these things in God's hands. That she may doubt as to herself may be natural enough, but others should not have encouraged her."

"You mean me, my lord?"

"You must not be angry with me, Mrs. Roden. The matter to me is so vital that I have to say what I think about it. It does seem to me that I am kept away from her, whereas, by all the ties which can bind a man and a woman together, I ought to be with her. Forms and ceremonies seem to sink to nothing, when I think of all she is to me, and remember that I am told that she is soon to be taken away from me."

"How would it be if she had a mother?"

"Why should her mother refuse my love for her daughter? But she has no mother. She has a father who has accepted me. I do believe that had the matter been left wholly to him, Marion would now be my wife."

"I was away, my lord, in Italy."

"I will not be so harsh to such a friend as you, as to say that I wish you had remained there; but I feel,—I cannot but feel——"

"My lord, I think the truth is that you hardly know how strong in such a matter as this our Marion herself can be. Neither have I nor has her father prevailed upon her. I can go back now, and tell you without breach of confidence all that passed between her and me. When first your name was discussed between us; when first I saw that you seemed to make much of her——"

"Make much of her!" exclaimed Hampstead, angrily.

"Yes; make much of her! When first I thought that you were becoming fond of her."

"You speak as though there had been some idle dallying. Did I not worship her? Did I not pour out my whole heart into her lap from the first moment in which I saw her? Did I hide it even from you? Was there any pretence, any falsehood?"

"No, indeed."

"Do not say that I made much of her. The phrase is vile. When she told me that she loved me, she made much of me."

"When first you showed us that you loved her," she continued, "I feared that it would not be for good."

"Why should it not be for good?"

"I will not speak of that now, but I thought so. I thought so, and I told my thoughts to Marion."

"You did?"

"I did;—and I think that in doing so, I did no more than my duty to a motherless girl. Of the reasons which I gave to her I will say nothing now. Her reasons were so much stronger, that mine were altogether unavailing. Her resolutions were built on so firm a rock, that they needed no persuasions of mine to strengthen them. I had ever known Marion to be pure, unselfish, and almost perfect. But I had never before seen how high she could rise, how certainly she could soar above all weakness and temptation. To her there was never a moment of doubt. She knew from the very first that it could not be so."

"It shall be so," he said, jumping up from his chair, and flinging up his arms.

"It was not I who persuaded her, or her father. Even you cannot persuade her. Having convinced herself that were she to marry you, she would injure you,

not all her own passionate love will induce her to accept the infinite delight of yielding to you. What may be best for you;—that is present to her mind, and nothing else. On that her heart is fixed, and so clear is her judgment respecting it, that she will not allow the words of any other to operate on her for a moment. Marion Fay, Lord Hampstead, is infinitely too great to have been persuaded in any degree by me.”

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Nevertheless Mrs. Roden did allow herself to say that in her opinion the lover should be allowed to see his mistress. She herself would go to Pegwell Bay, and endeavour to bring Marion back to Holloway. That Lord Hampstead should himself go down and spend his long hours at the little seaside place did not seem to her to be fitting. But she promised that she would do her best to arrange at any rate another meeting in Paradise Row.

CHAPTER XXIV.

LORD HAMPSTEAD AGAIN WITH MARION.

The Quaker had become as weak as water in his daughter's hands. To whatever she might have desired he would have given his assent. He went daily up from Pegwell Bay to Pogson and Littlebird's, but even then he was an altered man. It had been said there for a few days that his daughter was to become the wife of the eldest son of the Marquis of Kingsbury, and then it had been said that there could be no such marriage—because of Marion's health. The glory while it lasted he had borne meekly, but with a certain anxious satisfaction. The pride of his life had been in Marion, and

this young lord's choice had justified his pride. But the glory had been very fleeting. And now it was understood through all Pogson and Littlebird's that their senior clerk had been crushed, not by the loss of his noble son-in-law, but by the cause which produced the loss. Under these circumstances poor Zachary Fay had hardly any will of his own, except to do that which his daughter suggested to him. When she told him that she would wish to go up to London for a few days, he assented as a matter of course. And when she explained that she wished to do so in order that she might see Lord Hampstead, he only shook his head sadly, and was silent.

"Of course I will come as you wish it," Marion had said in her letter to her lover. "What would I not do that you wish,—except when you wish things that you know you ought not? Mrs. Roden says that I am to go up to be lectured. You mustn't be very hard upon me. I don't think you ought to ask me to do things which you know,—which you know that I cannot do. Oh, my lover! oh, my love! would that it were all over, and that you were free!"

In answer to this, and to other letters of the kind, he wrote to her long argumentative epistles, in which he strove to repress the assurances of his love, in order that he might convince her the better by the strength of his reasoning. He spoke to her of the will of God, and of the wickedness of which she would be guilty if she took upon herself to foretell the doings of Providence. He said much of the actual bond by which they had tied themselves together in declaring their mutual love. He endeavoured to explain to her that she could not be justified in settling such a question for herself without reference to the opinion of those who must know the world better than she did. Had the words of a

short ceremony been spoken, she would have been bound to obey him as her husband. Was she not equally bound now, already, to acknowledge his superiority,—and if not by him, was it not her manifest duty to be guided by her father? Then at the end of four carefully-written, well-stuffed pages, there would come two or three words of burning love. “My Marion, my self, my very heart!” It need hardly be said that as the well-stuffed pages went for nothing with Marion,—had not the least effect towards convincing her, so were the few words the very food on which she lived. There was no absurdity in the language of love that was not to her a gem so brilliant that it deserved to be garnered in the very treasure house of her memory! All those long useless sermons were preserved because they had been made rich and rare by the expression of his passion.

She understood him, and valued him at the proper rate, and measured him correctly in everything. He was so true, she knew him to be so true, that even his superlatives could not be other than true! But as for his reasoning, she knew that that came also from his passion. She could not argue the matter out with him, but he was wrong in it all. She was not bound to listen to any other voice but that of her own conscience. She was bound not to subject him to the sorrows which would attend him were he to become her husband. She could not tell how weak or how strong might be his nature in bearing the burden of the grief which would certainly fall upon him at her death. She had heard, and had in part seen, that time does always mitigate the weight of that burden. Perhaps it might be best that she should go at once, so that no prolonged period of his future career should be injured by his waiting. She had begun to think that he would be unable to look

for another wife while she lived. By degrees there came upon her the full conviction of the steadfastness, nay, of the stubbornness, of his heart. She had been told that men were not usually like that. When first he had become sweet to her, she had not thought that he would have been like that. Was it not almost unmanly,—or rather was it not womanly? And yet he,—strong and masterful as he was,—could he have aught of a woman's weakness about him? Could she have dreamed that it would be so from the first, she thought that from the very first she could have abstained.

"Of course I shall be at home on Tuesday at two. Am I not at home every day at all hours? Mrs. Roden shall not be there as you do not wish it, though Mrs. Roden has always been your friend. Of course I shall be alone. Papa is always in the City. Good to you! Of course I shall be good to you! How can I be bad to the one being that I love better than all the world? I am always thinking of you; but I do wish that you would not think so much of me. A man should not think so much of a girl,—only just at his spare moments. I did not think that it would be like that when I told you that you might love me."

All that Tuesday morning, before he left home, he was not only thinking of her, but trying to marshal in order what arguments he might use,—so as to convince her at last. He did not at all understand how utterly fruitless his arguments had been with her. When Mrs. Roden had told him of Marion's strength he had only in part believed her. In all matters concerning the moment Marion was weak and womanly before him. When he told her that this or the other thing was proper and becoming, she took it as Gospel because it came from him. There was something of the old awe even

when she looked up into his face. Because he was a great nobleman, and because she was the Quaker's daughter, there was still, in spite of their perfect love, something of superiority, something of inferiority of position. It was natural that he should command,—natural that she should obey. How could it be then that she should not at last obey him in this great thing which was so necessary to him? And yet hitherto he had never gone near to prevailing with her. Of course he marshalled all his arguments.

Gentle and timid as she was, she had made up her mind to everything, even down to the very greeting with which she would receive him. His first warm kiss had shocked her. She had thought of it since, and had told herself that no harm could come to her from such tokens of affection,—that it would be unnatural were she to refuse it to him. Let it pass by as an incident that should mean nothing. To hang upon his neck and to feel and to know that she was his very own,—that might not be given to her. To hear his words of love and to answer him with words as warm,—that could be allowed to her. As for the rest, it would be better that she should let it so pass by that there need be as little of contention as possible on a matter so trivial.

When he came into the room he took her at once, passive and unresisting, into his arms. "Marion," he said. "Marion! Do you say that you are ill? You are as bright as a rose."

"Rose leaves soon fall. But we will not talk about that. Why go to such a subject?"

"It cannot be helped." He still held her by the waist, and now again he kissed her. There was something in her passive submission which made him think at the moment that she had at last determined to yield

to him altogether. "Marion, Marion," he said, still holding her in his embrace, "you will be persuaded by me? You will be mine now?"

Gradually,—very gently,—she contrived to extricate herself. There must be no more of it, or his passion would become too strong for her. "Sit down, dearest," she said. "You flurry me by all this. It is not good that I should be flurried."

"I will be quiet, tame, motionless, if you will only say the one word to me. Make me understand that we are not to be parted, and I will ask for nothing else."

"Parted! No, I do not think that we shall be parted."

"Say that the day shall come when we may really be joined together; when——"

"No, dear; no; I cannot say that. I cannot alter anything that I have said before. I cannot make things other than they are. Here we are, we two, loving each other with all our hearts, and yet it may not be. My dear, dear lord!" She had never even yet learned another name for him than this. "Sometimes I ask myself whether it has been my fault." She was now sitting, and he was standing over her, but still holding her by the hand.

"There has been no fault. Why should either have been in fault?"

"When there is so great a misfortune there must generally have been a fault. But I do not think there has been any here. Do not misunderstand me, dear. The misfortune is not with me. I do not know that the Lord could have sent me a greater blessing than to have been loved by you,—were it not that your trouble, your grief, your complainings rob me of my joy."

"Then do not rob me," he said.

"Out of two evils you must choose the least. You have heard of that, have you not?"

"There need be no evil;—no such evil as this." Then he dropped her hand, and stood apart from her while he listened to her, or else walked up and down the room, throwing at her now and again a quick angry word, as she went on striving to make clear to him the ideas as they came to her mind.

"I do not know how I could have done otherwise," she said, "when you would make it so certain to me that you loved me. I suppose it might have been possible for me to go away, and not to say a word in answer."

"That is nonsense,—sheer nonsense," he said.

"I could not tell you an untruth. I tried it once, but the words would not come at my bidding. Had I not spoken them, you would read the truth in my eyes. What then could I have done? And yet there was not a moment in which I have not known that it must be as it is."

"It need not be; it need not be. It should not be."

"Yes, dear, it must be. As it is so why not let us have the sweet of it as far as it will go? Can you not take a joy in thinking that you have given an inexpressible brightness to your poor Marion's days; that you have thrown over her a heavenly light which would be all glorious to her if she did not see that you were covered by a cloud? If I thought that you could hold up your head with manly strength, and accept this little gift of my love, just for what it is worth,—just for what it is worth,—then I think I could be happy to the end."

"What would you have me do? Can a man love and not love?"

"I almost think he can. I almost think that men do. I would not have you not love me. I would not lose

my light and my glory altogether. But I would have your love to be of such a nature that it should not conquer you. I would have you remember your name and your family——”

“I care nothing for my name. As far as I am concerned, my name is gone.”

“Oh, my lord!”

“You have determined that my name shall go no further.”

“That is unmanly, Lord Hampstead. Because a poor weak girl such as I am cannot do all that you wish, are you to throw away your strength and your youth, and all the high hopes which ought to be before you? Would you say that it were well in another if you heard that he had thrown up everything, surrendered all his duties, because of his love for some girl infinitely beneath him in the world’s esteem?”

“There is no question of above and beneath. I will not have it. As to that, at any rate we are on a par.”

“A man and a girl can never be on a par. You have a great career, and you declare that it shall go for nothing because I cannot be your wife.”

“Can I help myself if I am broken-hearted? You can help me.”

“No, Lord Hampstead; it is there that you are wrong. It is there that you must allow me to say that I have the clearer knowledge. With an effort on your part the thing may be done.”

“What effort? What effort? Can I teach myself to forget that I have ever seen you?”

“No, indeed; you cannot forget. But you may resolve that, remembering me, you should remember me only for what I am worth. You should not buy your memories at too high a price.”

"What is it that you would have me do?"

"I would have you seek another wife."

"Marion!"

"I would have you seek another wife. If not instantly, I would have you instantly resolve to do so."

"It would not hurt you to feel that I loved another?"

"I think not. I have tried myself, and now I think that it would not hurt me. There was a time in which I owned to myself that it would be very bitter, and then I told myself, that I hoped,—that I hoped that you would wait. But now, I have acknowledged to myself the vanity and selfishness of such a wish. If I really love you am I not bound to want what may be best for you?"

"You think that possible?" he said, standing over her, and looking down upon her. "Judging from your own heart do you think that you could do that if outward circumstances made it convenient?"

"No, no, no."

"Why should you suppose me to be harder-hearted than yourself, more callous, more like a beast of the fields?"

"More like a man is what I would have you."

"I have listened to you, Marion, and now you may listen to me. Your distinctions as to men and women are all vain. There are those, men and women both, who can love and do love, and there are those who neither do nor can. Whether it be for good or evil,—we can, you and I, and we do. It would be impossible to think of giving yourself to another?"

"That is certainly true."

"It is the same with me,—and will ever be so. Whether you live or die, I can have no other wife than Marion Fay. As to that I have a right to expect that

you shall believe me. Whether I have a wife or not you must decide."

"Oh, dearest, do not kill me."

"It has to be so. If you can be firm so can I. As to my name and my family, it matters nothing. Could I be allowed to look forward and think that you would sit at my hearth, and that some child that should be my child should lie in your arms, then I could look forward to what you call a career. Not that he might be the last of a hundred Traffords, not that he might be an Earl or a Marquis like his forefathers, not that he might some day live to be a wealthy peer, would I have it so,—but because he would be yours and mine." Now she got up, and threw her arms around him, and stood leaning on him as he spoke. "I can look forward to that and think of a career. If that cannot be, the rest of it must provide for itself. There are others who can look after the Traffords,—and who will do so whether it be necessary or not. To have gone a little out of the beaten path, to have escaped some of the traditional absurdities, would have been something to me. To have let the world see how noble a Countess I could find for it—that would have satisfied me. And I had succeeded. I had found one that would really have graced the name. If it is not to be so,—why then let the name and family go on in the old beaten track. I shall not make another venture. I have made my choice, and it is come to this."

"You must wait, dear;—you must wait. I had not thought it would be like this; but you must wait."

"What God may have in store for me, who can tell. You have told me your mind, Marion; and now I trust that you will understand mine. I do not accept your decision, but you will accept mine. Think of it all, and

when you see me again in a day or two, then see whether you will not be able to join your lot to mine and make the best of it." Upon this he kissed her again, and left her without another word.

CHAPTER XXV.

CROCKER'S DISTRESS.

WHEN Midsummer came Paradise Row was alive with various interests. There was no one there who did not know something of the sad story of Marion Fay and her love. It was impossible that such a one as Lord Hampstead should make repeated visits to the street without notice. When Marion returned home from Pegwell Bay, even the potboy at The Duchess of Edinburgh knew why she had come, and Clara Demijohn professed to be able to tell all that passed at the interview next day. And there was the great "Duca" matter;—so that Paradise Row generally conceived itself to be concerned on all questions of nobility, both Foreign and British. There were the Ducaites and the anti-Ducaites. The Demijohn faction generally, as being under the influence of Crocker, were of opinion that George Roden being a Duke could not rid himself of his ducal nature, and they were loud in their expression of the propriety of calling the Duke Duke whether he wished it or no. But Mrs. Grimley at The Duchess was warm on the other side. George Roden, according to her lights, being a clerk in the Post Office, must certainly be a Briton, and being a Briton, and therefore free, was entitled to call himself whatever he pleased. She was generally presumed to enunciate a properly constitutional theory in the matter, and, as she was a leading personage in the neighbourhood, the Duca was for the

most part called by his old name; but there were contests, and on one occasion blows had been struck. All this helped to keep life alive in the Row.

But there had arisen another source of intense interest. Samuel Crocker was now regularly engaged to marry Miss Demijohn. There had been many difficulties before this could be arranged. Crocker not unnaturally wished that a portion of the enormous wealth which rumour attributed to Mrs. Demijohn should be made over to the bride on her marriage. But the discussions which had taken place between him and the old lady on the matter had been stormy and unsuccessful. "It's a sort of thing that one doesn't understand at all, you know," Crocker had said to Mrs. Grimley, giving the landlady to understand that he was not going to part with his own possession of himself without adequate consideration. Mrs. Grimley had comforted the young man by reminding him that the old lady was much given to hot brandy and water, and that she could not "take her money with her where she was going." Crocker had at last contented himself with an assurance that there should be a breakfast and a trousseau which was to cost £100. With the promise of this and the hope of what brandy-and-water might do for him, he had given in, and the match was made. Had there been no more than this in the matter the Row would not have been much stirred by it. The Row was so full of earls, marquises, and dukes that Crocker's love would have awakened no more than a passing attention, but for a concomitant incident which was touching in its nature, and interesting in its development. Daniel Tribbledale, junior clerk at Pogson and Littlebird's, had fought a battle with his passion for Clara Demijohn like a man; but, manly though the battle had been, Love had prevailed over him. He had at last found it impossible to

give up the girl of his heart, and he had declared his intention of "punching Crocker's head" should he ever find him in the neighbourhood of the Row. With the object of doing this he frequented the Row constantly from ten in the evening till two in the morning, and spent a great deal more money than he ought to have done at The Duchess. He would occasionally knock at No. 10, and boldly ask to be allowed to see Miss Clara. On one or two of these occasions he had seen her, and tears had flown in great quantities. He had thrown himself at her feet, and she had assured him that it was in vain. He had fallen back at Pogson and Littlebird's to £120 a year, and there was no prospect of an increase. Moreover the betrothment with Crocker was complete. Clara had begged him to leave the vicinity of Holloway. Nothing, he had sworn, should divorce him from Paradise Row. Should that breakfast ever be given; should these hated nuptials ever take place; he would be heard of. It was in vain that Clara had threatened to die on the threshold of the church if anything rash were done. He was determined, and Clara, no doubt, was interested in the persistency of his affection. It was, however, specially worthy of remark that Crocker and Tribbledale never did meet in Paradise Row.

Monday, 13th of July, was the day fixed for the marriage, and lodgings for the happy pair had been taken at Islington. It had been hoped that room might have been made for them at No. 10; but the old lady, fearing the interference of a new inmate, had preferred the horrors of solitude to the combined presence of her niece and her niece's husband. She had, however, given a clock and a small harmonium to grace the furnished sitting-room;—so that things might be said to stand on a sound and pleasant footing. Gradually, however, it

came to be thought both by the old and the young lady, that Crocker was becoming too eager on that great question of the Duca. When he declared that no earthly consideration should induce him to call his friend by any name short of that noble title which he was entitled to use, he was asked a question or two as to his practice at the office. For it had come round to Paradise Row that Crocker was giving offence at the office by his persistency. "When I speak of him I always call him the 'Duca,'" said Crocker, gallantly, "and when I meet him I always address him as Duca. No doubt it may for a while create a little coolness, but he will recognize at last the truth of the spirit which actuates me. He is 'the Duca.'"

"If you go on doing what they tell you not to do," said the old woman, "they'll dismiss you." Crocker had simply smiled ineffably. Not Æolus himself would dismiss him for a loyal adherence to the constitutional usages of European Courts.

Crocker was in truth making himself thoroughly disagreeable at the Post Office. Sir Boreas had had his own view as to Roden's title, and had been anxious to assist Lord Persiflage in forcing the clerk to accept his nobility. But when he had found that Roden was determined, he had given way. No order had been given on the subject. It was a matter which hardly admitted of an order. But it was understood that as Mr. Roden wished to be Mr. Roden, he was to be Mr. Roden. It was declared that good taste required that he should be addressed as he chose to be addressed. When, therefore, Crocker persisted it was felt that Crocker was a bore. When Crocker declared to Roden personally that his conscience would not allow him to encounter a man whom he believed to be a nobleman without calling him

by his title, the office generally felt that Crocker was an ass. Æolus was known to have expressed himself as very angry, and was said to have declared that the man must be dismissed sooner or later. This had been reported to Crocker. "Sir Boreas can't dismiss me for calling a nobleman by his right name," Crocker had replied indignantly. The clerks had acknowledged among themselves that this might be true, but had remarked that there were different ways of hanging a dog. If Æolus was desirous of hanging Crocker, Crocker would certainly find him the rope before long. There was a little bet made between Bobbin and Geraghty that the office would know Crocker no longer before the end of the year.

Alas, alas;—just before the time fixed for the poor fellow's marriage, during the first week of July, there came to our Æolus not only an opportunity for dismissing poor Crocker, but an occasion on which, by the consent of all, it was admitted to be impossible that he should not do so, and the knowledge of the sin committed came upon Sir Boreas at a moment of great exasperation caused by another source. "Sir Boreas," Crocker had said, coming into the great man's room, "I hope you will do me the honour of being present at my wedding breakfast." The suggestion was an unpardonable impertinence. "I am asking no one else in the Department except the Duca," said Crocker. With what special flea in his ear Crocker was made to leave the room instantly cannot be reported; but the reader may be quite sure that neither did Æolus nor the Duca accept the invitation. It was on that very afternoon that Mr. Jerningham, with the assistance of one of the messengers, discovered that Crocker had—actually torn up a bundle of official papers!

Among many official sins of which Crocker was often

guilty was that of "delaying papers." Letters had to be written, or more probably copies made, and Crocker would postpone the required work from day to day. Papers would get themselves locked up, and sometimes it would not be practicable to trace them. There were those in the Department who said that Crocker was not always trustworthy in his statements, and there had come up lately a case in which the unhappy one was supposed to have hidden a bundle of papers of which he denied having ever had the custody. Then arose a tumult of anger among those who would be supposed to have had the papers if Crocker did not have them, and a violent search was instituted. Then it was discovered that he had absolutely—destroyed the official documents! They referred to the reiterated complaints of a fidgety old gentleman who for years past had been accusing the Department of every imaginable iniquity. According to this irritable old gentleman, a diabolical ingenuity had been exercised in preventing him from receiving a single letter through a long series of years.

This was a new crime. Wicked things were often done, but anything so wicked as this had never before been perpetrated in the Department. The minds of the senior clerks were terribly moved, and the young men were agitated by a delicious awe. Crocker was felt to be abominable; but heroic also,—and original. It might be that a new opening for great things had been invented.

The fidgety old gentleman had never a leg to stand upon,—not a stump; but now it was almost impossible that he should not be made to know that all his letters of complaint had been made away with! Of course Crocker must be dismissed. He was at once suspended, and called upon for his written explanation. "And I

am to be married next week!" he said weeping to Mr. Jerningham. Aolus had refused to see him, and Mr. Jerningham, when thus appealed to, only shook his head. What could a Mr. Jerningham say to a man who had torn up official papers on the eve of his marriage? Had he laid violent hands on his bride, but preserved the papers, his condition, to Mr. Jerningham's thinking, would have been more wholesome.

It was never known who first carried the tidings to Paradise Row. There were those who said that Tribble-dale was acquainted with a friend of Bobbin, and that he made it all known to Clara in an anonymous letter. There were others who traced a friendship between the potboy at The Duchess and a son of one of the messengers. It was at any rate known at No. 10. Crocker was summoned to an interview with the old woman; and the match was then and there declared to be broken off. "What are your intentions, sir, as to supporting that young woman?" Mrs. Demijohn demanded with all the severity of which she was capable. Crocker was so broken-hearted that he had not a word to say for himself. He did not dare to suggest that perhaps he might not be dismissed. He admitted the destruction of the papers. "I never cared for him again when I saw him so knocked out of time by an old woman," said Clara afterwards.

"What am I to do about the lodgings?" asked Crocker weeping.

"Tear 'em up," said Mrs. Demijohn. "Tear 'em up. Only send back the clock and the harmonium."

Crocker in his despair looked about everywhere for assistance. It might be that Aolus would be softer-hearted than Clara Demijohn. He wrote to Lord Persiflage, giving him a very full account of the affair.

The papers, he said, had in fact been actually torn by accident. He was afraid of "the Duca," or he would have applied to him. "The Duca," no doubt had been his most intimate friend,—so he still declared,—but in such an emergency he did not know how to address "the Duca." But he bethought himself of Lord Hampstead, of that hunting acquaintance, with whom his intercourse had been so pleasant and so genial, and he made a journey down Hendon. Lord Hampstead at this time was living there all alone. Marion Fay had been taken back to Pegwell Bay, and her lover was at the old house holding intercourse almost with no one. His heart just now was very heavy with him. He had begun to believe that Marion would in truth never become his wife. He had begun to think that she would really die, and that he would never have had the sad satisfaction of calling her his own. All lightness and brightness had gone from him, all the joy which he used to take in argument, all the eagerness of his character,—unless the hungry craving of unsatisfied love could still be called an eagerness.

He was in this condition when Crocker was brought out to him in the garden where he was walking. "Mr. Crocker," he said, standing still in the pathway and looking into the man's face.

"Yes, my lord; it's me. I am Crocker. You remember me, my lord, down in Cumberland?"

"I remember you,—at Castle Hautboy."

"And out hunting, my lord,—when we had that pleasant ride home from Airey Force."

"What can I do for you now?"

"I always do think, my lord, that there is nothing like sport to cement affection. I don't know how you feel about it, my lord."

"If there is anything to be said—perhaps you will say it."

"And there's another bond, my lord. We have both been looking for the partners of our joys in Paradise Row."

"If you have anything to say, say it."

"And as for your friend, my lord, the,—the——. You know whom I mean. If I have given any offence it has only been because I've thought that as the title was certainly theirs, a young lady who shall be nameless ought to have the advantage of it. I've only done it because of my consideration for the family."

"What have you come here for, Mr. Crocker? I am not just now disposed to converse,—on, I may say, any subject. If there be anything——"

"Indeed, there is. Oh, my lord, they are going to dismiss me! For the sake of Paradise Row, my lord, pray, pray, interfere on my behalf." Then he told the whole story about the papers, merely explaining that they had been torn in accident. "Sir Boreas is angry with me because I have thought it right to call—you know whom—by his title, and now I am to be dismissed just when I was about to take that beautiful and accomplished young lady to the hymeneal altar. Only think if you and Miss Fay was to be divided in the same way!"

With much lengthened explanation, which was, however, altogether ineffectual, Lord Hampstead had to make his visitor understand that there was no ground on which he could even justify a request. "But a letter! You could write a letter. A letter from your lordship would do so much." Lord Hampstead shook his head. "If you were just to say that you had known me intimately down in Cumberland! Of course I am

not taking upon myself to say it was so,—but to save a poor fellow on the eve of his marriage!”

“I will write a letter,” said Lord Hampstead, thinking of it, turning over in his mind his own idea of what marriage would be to him. “I cannot say that we have been intimate friends, because it would not be true.”

“No;—no; no! Of course not that.”

“But I will write a letter to Sir Boreas. I cannot conceive that it should have any effect. It ought to have none.”

“It will, my lord.”

“I will write, and will say that your father is connected with my uncle, and that your condition in regard to your marriage may perhaps be accepted as a ground for clemency. Good day to you.” Not very quickly, but with profuse thanks and the shedding of some tears, poor Crocker took his leave. He had not been long gone before the following letter was written;—

“SIR,

“Though I have not the honour of any acquaintance with you, I take the liberty of writing to you as to the condition of one of the clerks in your office. I am perfectly aware that should I receive a reprimand from your hands, I shall have deserved it by my unjustifiable interference.

“Mr. Crocker represents to me that he is to be dismissed because of some act of which you as his superior officer highly disapprove. He asks me to appeal to you on his behalf because we have been acquainted with each other. His father is agent to my uncle Lord Persiflage, and we have met at my uncle’s house. I do not dare to put this forward as a plea for mercy. But I understand that Mr. Crocker is about to be married

almost immediately, and, perhaps, you will feel with me that a period in a man's life which should beyond all others be one of satisfaction, of joy, and of perfect contentment, may be regarded with a feeling of mercy which would be prejudicial if used more generally.

"Your faithful servant,

"HAMPSTEAD."

When he wrote those words as to the period of joy and satisfaction his own heart was sore, sore, sore almost to breaking. There could never be such joy, never be such satisfaction for him.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"DISMISSAL. B. B."

By return of post Lord Hampstead received the following answer to his letter;—

"MY DEAR LORD HAMPSTEAD,—

"Mr. Crocker's case is *a very bad one*; but the Postmaster General shall see your appeal, and his lordship will, I am sure, sympathize with your humanity—as do I also. I cannot take upon myself to say what his lordship will think it right to do, and it will be better, therefore, that you should abstain for the present from communicating with Mr. Crocker.

"I am,

"Your lordship's very faithful servant,

"BORRAS BODKIN."

Any excuse was sufficient to our Æolus to save him from the horror of dismissing a man. He knew well

that Crocker, as a public servant, was not worth his salt. Sir Boreas was blessed,—or cursed,—with a conscience, but the stings of his conscience, though they were painful, did not hurt him so much as those of his feelings. He had owned to himself on this occasion that Crocker must go. Crocker was in every way distasteful to him. He was not only untrustworthy and incapable, but audacious also, and occasionally impudent. He was a clerk of whom he had repeatedly said that it would be much better to pay him his salary and let him have perpetual leave of absence, than keep him even if there were no salary to be paid. Now there had come a case on which it was agreed by all the office that the man must go. Destroy a bundle of official papers! Mr. Jerningham had been heard to declare that the law was in fault in not having provided that a man should be at once sent to Newgate for doing such a thing. “The stupid old fool’s letters weren’t really worth anything,” Sir Boreas had said, as though attempting to palliate the crime! Mr. Jerningham had only shaken his head. What else could he do? It was not for him to dispute any matter with Sir Boreas. But to his thinking the old gentleman’s letters had become precious documents, priceless records, as soon as they had once been bound by the red tape of the Government, and enveloped by the security of an official pigeon-hole. To stay away without leave,—to be drunk,—to be obstinately idle,—to be impudent, were great official sins; but Mr. Jerningham was used to them, and knew that as they had often occurred before, so would they re-occur. Clerks are mortal men, and will be idle, will be reckless, will sometimes get into disreputable rows. A little added severity, Mr. Jerningham thought, would improve his branch of the department, but, knowing the nature of men, the nature especially of

Sir Boreas, he could make excuses. Here, however, was a case in which no superior Civil Servant could entertain a doubt. And yet Sir Boreas palliated even this crime! Mr. Jerningham shook his head, and Sir Boreas shoved on one side, so as to avoid for a day the pain of thinking about them, the new bundle of papers which had already formed itself on the great Crocker case. If some one would tear up that, what a blessing it would be!

In this way there was delay, during which Crocker was not allowed to show his face at the office, and during this delay Clara Demijohn became quite confirmed in her determination to throw over her engagement. Tribbledale with his £120 would be much better than Crocker with nothing. And then it was agreed generally in Paradise Row that there was something romantic in Tribbledale's constancy. Tribbledale was in the Row every day,—or perhaps rather every night;—seeking counsel from Mrs. Grimley, and comforting himself with hot gin-and-water. Mrs. Grimley was good-natured, and impartial to both the young men. She liked customers, and she liked marriages generally. "If he ain't got no income of course he's out of the running," Mrs. Grimley said to Tribbledale, greatly comforting the young man's heart. "You go in and win," said Mrs. Grimley, indicating by that her opinion that the ardent suitor would probably be successful if he urged his love at the present moment. "Strike while the iron is hot," she said, alluding probably to the heat to which Clara's anger would be warmed by the feeling that the other lover had lost his situation just when he was most bound to be careful in maintaining it.

Tribbledale went in and pleaded his case. It is probable that just at this time Clara herself was made acquainted with Tribbledale's frequent visits to The

Duchess, and though she may not have been pleased with the special rendezvous selected, she was gratified by the devotion shown. When Mrs. Grimley advised Tribbledale to "go in and win," she was, perhaps, in Clara's confidence. When a girl has told all her friends that she is going to be married, and has already expended a considerable portion of the sum of money allowed for her wedding garments, she cannot sink back into the simple position of an unengaged young woman without pangs of conscience and qualms of remorse. Paradise Row knew that her young man was to be dismissed from his office, and condoled with her frequently and most unpleasantly. Mrs. Duffer was so unbearable in the matter that the two ladies had quarrelled dreadfully. Clara from the first moment of her engagement with Crocker had been proud of the second string to her bow, and now perceived that the time had come in which it might be conveniently used.

It was near eleven when Tribbledale knocked at the door of No. 10, but nevertheless Clara was up, as was also the servant girl, who opened the door for the sake of discretion. "Oh, Daniel, what hours you do keep!" said Clara, when the young gentleman was shown into the parlour. "What on earth brings you here at such a time as this?"

Tribbledale was never slow to declare that he was brought thither by the overwhelming ardour of his passion. His love for Clara was so old a story, and had been told so often, that the repeating of it required no circumlocution. Had he chanced to meet her in the High Street on a Sunday morning, he would have begun with it at once. "Clara," he said, "will you have me? I know that that other scoundrel is a ruined man."

"Oh, Daniel, you shouldn't hit those as are down."

"Hasn't he been hitting me all the time that I was down? Hasn't he triumphed? Haven't you been in his arms?"

"Laws; no."

"And wasn't that hitting me when I was down, do you think?"

"It never did you any harm."

"Oh, Clara;—if you knew the nature of my love you'd understand the harm. Every time he has pressed your lips I have heard it, though I was in King's Head Court all the time."

"That must be a crammer, Daniel."

"I did;—not with the ears of my head, but with the fibres of my breast."

"Oh;—ah. But, Daniel, you and Sam used to be such friends at the first go off."

"Go off of what?"

"When he first took to coming after me. You remember the tea-party, when Marion Fay was here."

"I tried it on just then;—I did. I thought that, maybe, I might come not to care about it so much."

"I'm sure you acted it very well."

"And I thought that perhaps it might be the best way of touching that cold heart of yours."

"Cold! I don't know as my heart is colder than anybody else's heart."

"Would that you would make it warm once more for me."

"Poor Sam!" said Clara, putting her handkerchief up to her eyes.

"Why is he any poorer than me? I was first. At any rate I was before him."

"I don't know anything about firsts or lasts," said

Clara, as the ghosts of various Banquos flitted before her eyes.

"And as for him, what right has he to think of any girl? He's a poor mean creature, without the means of getting so much as a bed for a wife to lie on. He used to talk so proud of Her Majesty's Civil Service. Her Majesty's Civil Service has sent him away packing."

"Not yet, Daniel."

"They have. I've made it my business to find out, and Sir Boreas Bodkin has written the order to-day. 'Dismissal—B. B.' I know those who have seen the very words written in the punishment book of the Post Office."

"Poor Sam!"

"Destroying papers of the utmost importance about Her Majesty's Mail Service! What else was he to expect? And now he's penniless."

"A hundred and twenty isn't so very much, Daniel."

"Mr. Fay was saying only the other day that if I was married and settled they'd make it better for me."

"You're too fond of The Duchess, Daniel."

"No, Clara—no; I deny that. You ask Mrs. Grimley why it is I come to The Duchess so often. It isn't for anything that I take there."

"Oh; I didn't know. Young men when they frequent those places generally do take something."

"If I had a little home of my own with the girl I love on the other side of the fireplace, and perhaps a baby in her arms——" Tribbledale as he said this looked at her with all his eyes.

"Laws, Daniel; what things you do say!"

"I should never go then to any Duchess, or any Marquess of Granby, or to any Angel." These were public-houses so named, all standing thick together in

the neighbourhood of Paradise Row. "I should not want to go anywhere then,—except where that young woman and that baby were to be found."

"Daniel, you was always fine at poetry."

"Try me, if it isn't real prose. The proof of the pudding's in the eating. You come and try." By this time Clara was in his arms, and the re-engagement was as good as made. Crocker was no doubt dismissed,—or if not dismissed had shown himself to be unworthy. What could be expected of a husband who could tear up a bundle of Her Majesty's Mail papers? And then Daniel Tribbledale had exhibited a romantic constancy which certainly deserved to be rewarded. Clara understood that the gin-and-water had been consumed night after night for her sake. And there were the lodgings and the clock and the harmonium ready for the occasion. "I suppose it had better be so, Daniel, as you wish it so much."

"Wish it! I have always wished it. I wouldn't change places now with Mr. Pogson himself."

"He married his third wife three years ago!"

"I mean in regard to the whole box and dice of it. I'd rather have my Clara with £120, than be Pogson and Littlebird with all the profits." The gratifying assurance was rewarded, and then, considerably after midnight, the triumphant lover took his leave.

Early on the following afternoon Crocker was in Paradise Row. He had been again with Lord Hampstead, and had succeeded in worming out of the good-natured nobleman something of the information contained in the letter from Sir Boreas. The matter was to be left to the Postmaster-General. Now there was an idea in the office that when a case was left to his lordship, his lordship never proceeded to extremities.

Kings are bound to pardon if they allow themselves to be personally concerned as to punishment. There was something of the same feeling in regard to official discipline. As a fact the letter from Sir Boreas had been altogether false. He had known, poor man, that he must at last take the duty of deciding upon himself, and had used the name of the great chief simply as a mode of escape for the moment. But Crocker had felt that the mere statement indicated pardon. The very delay indicated pardon. Relying upon these indications he went to Paradise Row, dressed in his best frock coat, with gloves in his hand, to declare to his love that the lodgings need not be abandoned, and that the clock and harmonium might be preserved.

"But you've been dismissed!" said Clara.

"Never! never!"

"It has been written in the book! 'Dismissal—B. B.!' I know the eyes that have seen it."

"That's not the way they do it at all," said Crocker, who was altogether confused.

"It has been written in the book, Sam; and I know that they never go back from that."

"Who wrote it? Nothing has been written. There isn't a book;—not at least like that. Tribbledale has invented it."

"Oh, Sam, why did you tear those papers;—Her Majesty's Mail papers? What else was there to expect? 'Dismissal—B. B.;' Why did you do it,—and you engaged to a young woman? No;—don't come nigh to me. How is a young woman to go and get herself married to a young man, and he with nothing to support her? It isn't to be thought of. When I heard those words, 'Dismissal—B. B.,' I thought my very heart would sink within me."

"It's nothing of the kind," said Crocker.

"What's nothing of the kind?"

"I ain't dismissed at all."

"Oh, Sam; how dare you?"

"I tell you I ain't. He's written a letter to Lord Hampstead, who has always been my friend. Hampstead wasn't going to see me treated after that fashion. Hampstead wrote, and then Æolus wrote,—that's Sir Boreas,—and I've seen the letter,—that is, Hampstead told me what there is in it; and I ain't to be dismissed at all. When I heard the good news the first thing I did was to come as fast as my legs would carry me, and tell the girl of my heart."

Clara did not quite believe him; but then neither had she quite believed Tribbledale, when he had announced the dismissal with the terrible corroboration of the great man's initials. But the crime committed seemed to her to be so great that she could not understand that Crocker should be allowed to remain after the perpetration of it. Crocker's salary was £150; and, balancing the two young men together as she had often done, though she liked the poetry of Tribbledale, she did on the whole prefer the swagger and audacity of Crocker. Her Majesty's Civil Service, too, had its charms for her. The Post Office was altogether superior to Pogson and Littlebird's. Pogson and Littlebird's hours were 9 to 5. Those of Her Majesty's Service were much more genteel;—10 namely to 4. But what might not a man do who had shown the nature of his disposition by tearing up official papers? And then, though the accidents of the occasion had enveloped her in difficulties on both sides, it seemed to her that, at the present moment, the lesser difficulties would be encountered by adhering to Tribbledale. She could excuse herself with

Crocker. Paradise Row had already declared that the match with Crocker must be broken off. Crocker had indeed been told that the match was to be broken off. When Tribbledale had come to her overnight she had felt herself to be a free woman. When she had given way to the voice of the charmer, when she had sunk into his arms, softened by that domestic picture which he had painted, no pricks of conscience had disturbed her happiness. Whether the "Dismissal—B. B." had or had not yet been written, it was sure to come. She was as free to "wed another" as was Venice when her Doge was deposed. She could throw herself back upon the iniquity of the torn papers were Crocker to complain. But should she now return to her Crocker, how could she excuse herself with Tribbledale? "It is all over between you and me, Sam," she said with her handkerchief up to her eyes.

"All over! Why should it be all over?"

"You was told it was all over."

"That was when all the Row said that I was to be dismissed. There was something in it,——then; though, perhaps, a girl might have waited till a fellow had got up upon his legs again."

"Waiting ain't no pleasant, Mr. Crocker, when a girl has to look after herself."

"But I ain't dismissed at all, and there needn't be any waiting. I thought that you would be suffering as well as me, and so I came right away to you, all at once."

"So I have suffered, Sam. No one knows what I have suffered."

"But it'll come all right now?" Clara shook her head. "You don't mean that Tribbledale's been and talked you over already?"

"I knew Mr. Tribbledale before ever I saw you, Sam."

"How often have I heard you call him a poor mean skunk?"

"Never, Crocker; never. Such a word never passed my lips."

"Something very like it then."

"I may have said he wanted sperrit. I may have said so, though I disremember it. But if I did,—what of that?"

"You despised him."

"No, Crocker. What I despise is a man as goes and tears up Her Majesty's Mail papers. Tribbledale never tore up anything at Pogson and Littlebird's,—except what was to be tore. Tribbledale was never turned out for nigh a fortnight, so that he couldn't go and show his face in King's Head Court. Tribbledale never made hisself hated by everybody." That unknown abominable word which Crocker had put into her mouth had roused all the woman within her, so that she was enabled to fight her battle with a courage which would not have come to her aid had he been more prudent.

"Who hates me?"

"Mr. Jerningham does, and Roden, and Sir Boreas, and Bobbin." She had learned all their names. "How can they help hating a man that tears up the mail papers! And I hate you."

"Clara!"

"I do. What business had you to say I used that nasty word? I never do use them words. I wouldn't even so much as look at a man who'd demean himself to put such words as them into my mouth. So I tell you what is, Mr. Crocker; you may just go away. I am going to become Daniel Tribbledale's wife, and it isn't becoming in you to stand here talking to a young woman that is engaged to another young man."

"And this is to be the end of it?"

"If you please, Mr. Crocker."

"Well!"

"If ever you feel inclined to speak your mind to another young woman, and you carry it as far as we did, and you wishes to hold on to her, don't you go and tear Her Majesty's Mail papers. And when she tells you a bit of her mind, as I did just now, don't you go and put nasty words into her mouth. Now, if you please, you may just as well send over that clock and that harmonium to Daniel Tribbledale, Esq., King's Head Court, Great Broad Street." So saying she left him, and congratulated herself on having terminated the interview without much unpleasantness.

Crocker, as he shook the dust off his feet upon leaving Paradise Row, began to ask himself whether he might not upon the whole congratulate himself as to the end to which that piece of business had been brought. When he had first resolved to offer his hand to the young lady, he had certainly imagined that that hand would not be empty. Clara was no doubt "a fine girl," but not quite so young as she was once. And she had a temper of her own. Matrimony, too, was often followed by many troubles. Paradise Row would no doubt utter jeers, but he need not go there to hear them. He was not quite sure but that the tearing of the papers would in the long run be beneficial to him.

CHAPTER XXVII.

PEGWELL BAY.

JULY had come and nearly gone before Lord Hampstead again saw Marion Fay. He had promised not to go to Pegwell Bay,—hardly understanding why such a

promise had been exacted from him, but still acceding to it when it had been suggested to him by Mrs. Roden, at the request, as she said, of the Quaker. It was understood that Marion would soon return to Holloway, and that on that account the serenity of Pegwell Bay need not be disturbed by the coming of so great a man as Lord Hampstead. Hampstead had of course ridiculed the reason, but had complied with the request,—with the promise, however, that Marion should return early in the summer. But the summer weeks had passed by, and Marion did not return.

Letters passed between them daily in which Marion attempted always to be cheerful. Though she had as yet invented no familiar name for her noble lover, yet she had grown into familiarity with him, and was no longer afraid of his nobility. "You oughtn't to stay there," she said, "wasting your life and doing nothing, because of a sick girl. You've got your yacht, and are letting all the summer weather go by." In answer to this he wrote to her, saying that he had sold his yacht. "Could you have gone with me, I would have kept it," he wrote. "Would you go with me I would have another ready for you, before you would be ready. I will make no assurance as to my future life. I cannot even guess what may become of me. It may be that I shall come to live on board some ship so that I may be all alone. But with my heart as it is now I cannot bear the references which others make to me about empty pleasures." At the same time he sold his horses, but he said nothing to her as to that.

Gradually he did acknowledge to himself that it was her doom to die early,—almost acknowledged to himself that she was dying. Nevertheless he still thought that it would have been fit that they should be married. "If

I knew that she were my own even on her deathbed," he once said to Mrs. Roden, "there would be a comfort to me in it." He was so eager in this that Mrs. Roden was almost convinced. The Quaker was willing that it should be so,—but willing also that it should not be so. He would not even try to persuade his girl as to anything. It was his doom to see her go, and he, having realized that, could not bring himself to use a word in opposition to her word. But Marion herself was sternly determined against the suggestion. It was unfitting, she said, and would be wicked. It was not the meaning of marriage. She could not bring herself to disturb the last thoughts of her life, not only by the empty assumption of a grand name, but by the sounding of that name in her ears from the eager lips of those around her. "I will be your love to the end," she said, "your own Marion. But I will not be made a Countess, only in order that a vain name may be carved over my grave." "God has provided a bitter cup for your lips, my love," she wrote again, "in having put it into your head to love one whom you must lose so soon. And mine is bitter because yours is bitter. But we cannot rid ourselves of the bitterness by pretences. Would it make your heart light to see me dressed up for a bridal ceremony, knowing, as you would know, that it was all for nothing? My lord, my love, let us take it as God has provided it. It is only because you grieve that I grieve;—for you and my poor father. If you could only bring yourself to be reconciled, then it would be so much to me to have had you to love me in my last moments,—to love me and to be loved."

He could not but accept her decision. Her father and Mrs. Roden accepted it, and he was forced to do so also. He acknowledged to himself now that there

was no appeal from it. Her very weakness gave her a strength which dominated him. There was an end of all his arguments and his strong phrases. He was aware that they had been of no service to him,—that her soft words had been stronger than all his reasonings. But not on that account did he cease to wish that it might be as he had once wished, since he had first acknowledged to himself his love. "Of course I will not drive her," he said to Mrs. Roden, when that lady urged upon him the propriety of abstaining from a renewal of his request. "Had I any power of driving her, as you say, I would not do so. I think it would be better. That is all. Of course it must be as she shall decide."

"It would be a comfort to her to think that you and she thought alike about all thing," said Mrs. Roden.

"There are points on which I cannot alter my convictions even for her comfort," he answered. "She bids me love some other woman. Can I comfort her by doing that? She bids me seek another wife. Can I do that;—or say that I will do it at some future time? It would comfort her to know that I have no wound,—that I am not lame and sick and sore and weary. It would comfort her to know that my heart is not broken. How am I to do that for her?"

"No;"—said Mrs. Roden—"no."

"There is no comfort. Her imagination paints for her some future bliss, which shall not be so far away as to be made dim by distance,—in enjoying which we two shall be together, as we are here, with our hands free to grasp each other, and our lips free to kiss;—a heaven, but still a heaven of this world, in which we can hang upon each other's necks and be warm to each other's hearts. That is to be, to her, the reward of her innocence, and in the ecstasy of her faith she believes

in it, as though it were here. I do think,—I do think,—that if I told her that it should be so, that I trusted to renew my gaze upon her beauty after a few short years, then she would be happy entirely. It would be for an eternity, and without the fear of separation.”

“Then why not profess as she does?”

“A lie? As I know her truth when she tells me her creed, so would she know my falsehood, and the lie would be vain.”

“Is there then to be no future world, Lord Hampstead?”

“Who has said so? Certainly not I. I cannot conceive that I shall perish altogether. I do not think that if, while I am here, I can tame the selfishness of self, I shall reach a step upwards in that world which shall come next after this. As to happiness, I do not venture to think much of it. If I can only be somewhat nobler,—somewhat more like the Christ whom we worship,—that will be enough without happiness. If there be truth in this story, He was not happy. Why should I look for happiness,—unless it be when the struggle of many worlds shall have altogether purified my spirit? But thinking like that,—believing like that,—how can I enter into the sweet Epicurean Paradise which that child has prepared for herself?”

“Is it no better than that?”

“What can be better, what can be purer,—if only it be true? And though it be false to me, it may be true to her. It is for my sake that she dreams of her Paradise,—that my wounds may be made whole, that my heart may be cured. Christ’s lesson has been so learned by her that no further learning seems necessary. I fancy sometimes that I can see the platform raised just one step above the ground on which I stand,—and

look into the higher world to which I am ascending. It may be that it is given to her to look up the one rung of the ladder by mounting which she shall find herself enveloped in the full glory of perfection."

In conversations such as these Mrs. Roden was confounded by the depth of the man's love. It became impossible to bid him not be of a broken heart, or even to allude to those fresh hopes which Time would bring. He spoke to her often of his future life, always speaking of a life from which Marion would have been withdrawn by death, and did so with a cold, passionless assurance which showed her that he had almost resolved as to the future. He would see all lands that were to be seen, and converse with all people. The social condition of God's creatures at large should be his study. The task would be endless, and, as he said, an endless task hardly admits of absolute misery. "If I die there will be an end of it. If I live till old age shall have made me powerless to carry on my work, time will then probably have done something to dim the feeling." "I think," he said again;—"I feel that could I but remember her as my wife——"

"It is impossible," said Mrs. Roden.

"But if it were so! It would be no more than a thin threadbare cloak over a woman's shivering shoulders. It is not much against the cold; but it would be very cruel to take that little from her." She looked at him with her eyes flooded with tears, but she could only shake her head in sign that it was impossible.

At last, just at the end of July, there came a request that he would go down to Pegwell Bay. "It is so long since we have seen each other," she wrote, "and, perhaps, it is better that you should come than that I should go. The doctor is fidgety, and says so. But my

darling will be good to me;—will he not? When I have seen a tear in your eyes it has gone near to crush me. 'That a woman, or even a man, should weep at some unexpected tidings of woe is natural. But who cries for spilt milk? Tell me that God's hand, though it be heavy to you, shall be borne with reverence and obedience and love."

He did not tell her this, but he resolved that if possible she should see no tears. As for that cheerfulness, that reconciliation to his fate which she desired, he knew it to be impossible. He almost brought himself to believe as he travelled down to Pegwell Bay that it would be better that they should not meet. To thank the Lord for all His mercies was in her mind. To complain with all the bitterness of his heart of the cruelty with which he was treated was in his. He had told Mrs. Roden that according to his creed there would be a better world to come for him if he could succeed in taming the selfishness of self. But he told himself now that the struggle to do so had hitherto been vain. There had been but the one thing which had ever been to him supremely desirable. He had gone through the years of his early life forming some Utopian ideas,—dreaming of some perfection in politics, in philanthropy, in social reform, and the like,—something by devoting himself to which he could make his life a joy to himself. 'Then this girl had come across him, and there had suddenly sprung up within him a love so strong that all these other things faded into littlenesses. They should not be discarded. Work would be wanted for his life, and for hers. But here he had found the true salt by which all his work would be vivified and preserved and made holy and happy and glorious. There had come a something to him that was all that he wanted it to be.

And now the something was fading from him,—was already all but gone. In such a state how should he tame the selfishness of self? He abandoned the attempt, and told himself that difficulties had been prepared for him greater than any of which he had dreamed when he had hoped that that taming might be within his power. He could not even spare her in his selfishness. He declared to himself that it was so, and almost owned that it would be better that he should not go to her.

“Yes,” she said, when he sat down beside her on her sofa, at an open window looking out on the little bay, “put your hand on mine, dear, and leave it there. To have you with me, to feel the little breeze, and to see you and to touch you is absolute happiness.”

“Why did you so often tell me not to come?”

“Ah, why? But I know why it was, my lord.” There was something half of tenderness, half pleasantry in the mode of address, and now he had ceased to rebel against it.

“Why should I not come if it be a joy to you?”

“You must not be angry now.”

“Certainly not angry.”

“We have got through all that,—you and I have for ourselves;—but there is a sort of unseemliness in your coming down here to see a poor Quaker’s daughter.”

“Marion!”

“But there is. We had got through all that in Paradise Row. Paradise Row had become used to you, and I could bear it. But here—— They will all be sure to know who you are.”

“Who cares?”

“That Marion Fay should have a lover would of itself make a stir in this little place;—but that she

should have a lord for her lover! One does'nt want to be looked at as a miracle."

"The follies of others should not ruffle you and me."

"That's very well, dear;—but what if one is ruffled? But I won't be ruffled, and you shall come. When I thought that I should go again to our own house, then I thought we might perhaps dispense with the ruffling;—that was all."

There was a something in these words which he could not stand,—which he could not bear and repress that tear which, as she had said, would go near to crush her if she saw it. Had she not plainly intimated her conviction that she would never again return to her old home? Here, here in this very spot, the doom was to come, and to come quickly. He got up and walked across the room, and stood a little behind her, where she could not see his face.

"Do not leave me," she said. "I told you to stay and let your hand rest on mine." Then he returned, and laying his hand once again upon her lap turned his face away from her. "Bear it," she said. "Bear it." His hand quivered where it lay as he shook his head. "Call upon your courage and bear it."

"I cannot bear it," he said, rising suddenly from his chair, and hurrying out of the room. He went out of the room and from the house, on to the little terrace which ran in front of the sea. But his escape was of no use to him; he could not leave her. He had come out without his hat, and he could not stand there in the sun to be stared at. "I am a coward," he said, going back to her and resuming his chair. "I own it. Let there be no more said about it. When a trouble comes to me, it conquers me. Little troubles I think I could bear. If it had been all else in all the world,—if it had been my

life before my life was your life, I think that no one would have seen me blench. But now I find that when I am really tried, I fail."

"It is in God's hands, dearest."

"Yes;—it is in God's hands. There is some power, no doubt, that makes you strong in spirit, but frail in body; while I am strong to live but weak of heart. But how will that help me?"

"Oh, Lord Hampstead, I do so wish you had never seen me."

"You should not say that, Marion; you shall not think it. I am ungrateful; because, were it given me to have it all back again, I would not sell what I have had of you, though the possession has been so limited, for all other imaginable treasures. I will bear it. Oh, my love, I will bear it. Do not say again that you wish you had not seen me."

"For myself, dear,—for myself——"

"Do not say it for me. I will struggle to make a joy of it, a joy in some degree, though my heart bleeds at the widowhood that is coming on it. I will build up for myself a memory in which there shall be much to satisfy me. I shall have been loved by her to have possessed whose love has been and shall be a glory to me."

"Loved indeed, my darling."

"Though there might have been such a heaven of joy, even that shall be counted as much. It shall be to me during my future life as though when wandering through the green fields in some long-past day, I had met a bright angel from another world; and the angel had stopped to speak to me, and had surrounded me with her glorious wings, and had given me of her heavenly light, and had spoken to me with the music

of the spheres, and I had thought that she would stay with me for ever. But there had come a noise of the drums and a sound of the trumpets, and she had flown away from me up to her own abode. To have been so favoured, though it had been but for an hour, should suffice for a man's life. I will bear it, though it be in solitude."

"No, darling; not in solitude."

"It will be best so for me. The light and the music and the azure of the wings will so remain with me the purer and the brighter. Oh,—if it had been! But I will bear it. No ear shall again hear a sound of complaint. Not yours even, my darling, my own, mine for so short a time, but yet my very own for ever and ever." Then he fell on his knees beside her, and hid his face in her dress, while the fingers of both her hands rambled through his hair. "You are going," he said, when he rose up to his feet, "you are going whither I cannot go."

"You will come; you will come to me."

"You are going now, now soon, and I doubt not that you are going to joys inexpressible. I cannot go till some chance may take me. If it be given to you in that further world to see those and to think of those whom you have left below, then, if my heart be true to your heart, keep your heart true to mine. If I can fancy that, if I can believe that it is so, then shall I have that angel with me, and though my eyes may not see the tints, my ears will hear the music;—and though the glory be not palpable as is the light of heaven, there will be an inner glory in which my soul will be sanctified." After that there were not many words spoken between them, though he remained there till he was disturbed by the Quaker's coming. Part of the time she slept with her hand in his, and when awake she was

contented to feel his touch as he folded the scarf close round her neck and straightened the shawl which lay across her feet, and now and again stroked her hair and put it back behind her ears as it strayed upon her forehead. Ever and again she would murmur a word or two of love as she revelled in the perception of his solitude. What was there for her to regret, for her to whom was given the luxury of such love? Was not a month of it more than a whole life without it? Then, when the father came, Hampstead took his leave. As he kissed her lips, something seemed to tell him that it would be for the last time. It was not good, the Quaker had said, that she should be disturbed. Yes; he could come again; but not quite yet.

At the very moment when the Quaker so spoke she was pressing her lips to his. "God keep you and take you, my darling," she whispered to him, "and bring you to me in heaven." She noticed not at all at the moment the warm tears that were running on to her own face; nor did the Quaker seem to notice it when Lord Hampstead left the house without saying to him a word of farewell.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LADY AMALDINA'S WEDDING.

THE time came round for Lady Amaldina's marriage, than which nothing more august, nothing more aristocratic, nothing more truly savouring of the hymeneal altar, had ever been known or was ever to be known in the neighbourhood of Hanover Square. For it was at last decided that the marriage should take place in London before any of the aristocratic assistants at the ceremony should have been whirled away into autumnal

spaces. Lord Llwdydlw himself knew but very little about it,—except this, that nothing would induce him so to hurry on the ceremony as to interfere with his Parliamentary duties. A day in August had been mentioned in special reference to Parliament. He was willing to abide by that, or to go to the sacrifice at any earlier day of which Parliament would admit. Parliament was to sit for the last time on Wednesday, 12th August, and the marriage was fixed for the 13th. Lady Amaldina had prayed for the concession of a week. Readers will not imagine that she based her prayers on the impatience of love. Nor could a week be of much significance in reference to that protracted and dangerous delay to which the match had certainly been subjected. But the bevy might escape. How were twenty young ladies to be kept together in the month of August when all the young men were rushing off to Scotland? Others were not wedded to their duties as was Lord Llwdydlw. Lady Amaldina knew well how completely Parliament became a mere affair of Governmental necessities during the first weeks of August. “I should have thought that just on this one occasion you might have managed it,” she said to him, trying to mingle a tone of love with the sarcasm which at such a crisis was natural to her. He simply reminded her of the promise which he had made to her in the spring. He thought it best not to break through arrangements which had been fixed. When she told him of one very slippery member of the bevy,—slippery, not as to character, but in reference to the movements of her family,—he suggested that no one would know the difference if only nineteen were to be clustered round the bride’s train. “Don’t you know that they must be in pairs?” “Will not nine pairs suffice?” he asked. “And thus make one of them an enemy for

ever by telling her that I wish to dispense with her services!"

But it was of no use. "Dispense with them altogether," he said, looking her full in the face. "The twenty will not quarrel with you. My object is to marry you, and I don't care twopence for the bridesmaids." There was something so near to a compliment in this, that she was obliged to accept it. And she had, too, begun to perceive that Lord Llwdytlw was a man not easily made to change his mind. She was quite prepared for this in reference to her future life. A woman, she thought, might be saved much trouble by having a husband whom she was bound to obey. But in this matter of her marriage ceremony,—this last affair in which she might be presumed to act as a free woman,—she did think it hard that she might not be allowed to have her own way. The bridegroom, however, was firm. If Thursday, the 13th, did not suit her, he would be quite ready on Thursday, the 20th. "There wouldn't be one of them left in London," said Lady Amaldin. "What on earth do you think that they are to do with themselves?"

But all the bevy were true to her. Lady Amelia Beaudesert was a difficulty. Her mother insisted on going to a far-away Bavarian lake on which she had a villa;—but Lady Amelia at the last moment surrendered the villa rather than break up the bevy, and consented to remain with a grumpy old aunt in Essex till an opportunity should offer. It may be presumed, therefore, that it was taken to be a great thing to be one of the bevy. It is, no doubt, a pleasant thing for a girl to have it asserted in all the newspapers that she is, by acknowledgment, one of the twenty most beautiful unmarried ladies in Great Britain.

Lady Frances was of course one of the bevy. But there was a member of the family,—a connection rather,—whom no eloquence could induce to show himself either in the church or at the breakfast. This was Lord Hampstead. His sister came to him and assured him that he ought to be there. "Sorrows," she said, "that have declared themselves before the world are held as sufficient excuse; but a man should not be hindered from his duties by secret grief."

"I make no secret of it. I do not talk about my private affairs. I do not send a town-crier to Charing Cross to tell the passers-by that I am in trouble. But I care not whether men know or not that I am unfitted for joining in such festivities. My presence is not wanted for their marriage."

"It will be odd."

"Let it be odd. I most certainly shall not be there." But he remembered the occasion, and showed that he did so by sending to the bride the handsomest of all the gems which graced her exhibition of presents, short of the tremendous set of diamonds which had come from the Duke of Merioneth.

This collection was supposed to be the most gorgeous thing that had ever as yet been arranged in London. It would certainly not be too much to say that the wealth of precious toys brought together would, if sold at its cost price, have made an ample fortune for a young newly-married couple. The families were noble and wealthy and the richness of the wedding presents was natural. It might perhaps have been better had not the value of the whole been stated in one of the newspapers of the day. Who was responsible for the valuation was never known, but it seemed to indicate that the costliness of the gifts was more thought of than the affec-

tion of the givers; and it was undoubtedly true that, in high circles and among the clubs, the cost of the collection was much discussed. The diamonds were known to a stone, and Hampstead's rubies were spoken of almost as freely as though they were being exhibited in public. Lord Llwdytlw when he heard of all this muttered to his maiden sister a wish that a gnome would come in the night and run away with everything. He felt himself degraded by the publicity given to his future wife's ornaments. But the gnome did not come, and the young men from Messrs. Bijou and Carcanet were allowed to arrange the tables and shelves for the exhibition.

The breakfast was to take place at the Foreign Office, at which the bride's father was for the time being the chief occupant. Lord Persiflage had not at first been willing that it should be so, thinking that his own more modest house might suffice for the marriage of his own daughter. But grander counsels had been allowed to prevail. With whom the idea first arose Lord Persiflage never knew. It might probably have been with some of the bevy, who had felt that an ordinary drawing-room would hardly suffice for so magnificent an array of toilets. Perhaps the thought had first occurred to Messrs. Bijou and Carcanet, who had foreseen the glory of spreading out all that wealth in the magnificent saloon intended for the welcoming of ambassadors. But it travelled from Lady Amaldina to her mother, and was passed on from Lady Persiflage to her husband. "Of course the Ambassadors will all be there," the Countess had said, "and, therefore, it will be a public occasion." "I wish we could be married at Llanfihangel," Lord Llwdytlw said to his bride. Now Llanfihangel church was a very small edifice, with a thatched roof, among the mountains in North Wales, with which Lady Amal-

dina had been made acquainted when visiting the Duchess, her future mother-in-law. But Llwdytlw was not to have his way in everything, and the preparations at the Foreign Office were continued.

The beautifully embossed invitations were sent about among a large circle of noble and aristocratic friends. All the Ambassadors and all the Ministers, with all their wives and daughters, were, of course, asked. As the breakfast was to be given in the great Banqueting Hall at the Foreign Office it was necessary that the guests should be many. It is sometimes well in a matter of festivals to be saved from extravagance by the modest size of one's rooms. Lord Persiflage told his wife that his daughter's marriage would ruin him. In answer to this she reminded him that Llwdytlw had asked for no fortune. Lord Llwdytlw was one of those men who prefer giving to taking. He had a feeling that a husband should supply all that was wanted, and that a wife should owe everything to the man she marries. The feeling is uncommon just at present,—except with the millions who neither have nor expect other money than what they earn. If you are told that the daughter of an old man who has earned his own bread is about to marry a young man in the same condition of life, it is spoken of as a misfortune. But Lord Llwdytlw was old-fashioned, and had the means of acting in accordance with his prejudices. Let the marriage be ever so gorgeous, it would not cost the dowry which an Earl's daughter might have expected. That was the argument used by Lady Persiflage, and it seemed to have been effectual.

As the day drew near it was observed that the bridegroom became more sombre and silent even than usual. He never left the House of Commons as long as it was

open to him as a refuge. His Saturdays and his Sundays and his Wednesdays he filled up with work so various and unceasing that there was no time left for those pretty little attentions which a girl about to be married naturally expects. He did call, perhaps, every other day at his bride's house, but never remained there above two minutes. "I am afraid he is not happy," the Countess said to her daughter.

"Oh, yes, mamma, he is."

"Then why does he go on like that?"

"Oh, mamma, you do not know him."

"Do you?"

"I think so. My belief is that there isn't a man in London so anxious to be married as Llwdytlhw."

"I am glad of that."

"He has lost so much time that he knows it ought to be got through and done with without further delay. If he could only go to sleep and wake up a married man of three months' standing, he would be quite happy. If it could be administered under chloroform it would be so much better! It is the doing of the thing, and the being talked about and looked at, that is so odious to him."

"Then why not have had it done quietly, my dear?"

"Because there are follies, mamma, to which a woman should never give way. I will not have myself made humdrum. If I had been going to marry a handsome young man so as to have a spice of romance out of it all, I would have cared nothing about the bridesmaids and the presents. The man then would have stood for everything. Llwdytlhw is not young, and is not handsome."

"But he is thoroughly noble."

"Quite so. He's as good as gold. He will always be somebody in people's eyes because he's great and

grand and trustworthy all round. But I want to be somebody in people's eyes, too, mamma. I'm all very well to look at, but nothing particular. I'm papa's daughter, which is something,—but not enough. I mean to begin and be magnificent. He understands it all, and I don't think he'll oppose me when once this exhibition day is over. I've thought all about it, and I think that I know what I'm doing."

At any rate, she had her way, and thoroughly enjoyed the task she had on hand. When she had talked of a possible romance with a handsome young lover she had not quite known herself. She might have made the attempt, but it would have been a failure. She could fall in love with a Master of Ravenswood in a novel, but would have given herself by preference,—after due consideration,—to the richer, though less poetical, suitor. Of good sterling gifts she did know the value, and was therefore contented with her lot. But this business of being married, with all the most extravagant appurtenances of the hymeneal altar, was to her taste.

That picture in one of the illustrated papers which professed to give the hymeneal altar at St. George's, with the Bishop and the Dean and two Queen's Chaplains officiating, and the bride and the bridegroom in all their glory, with a Royal Duke and a Royal Duchess looking on, with all the Stars and all the Garters from our own and other Courts, and especially with the bevy of twenty, standing in ten distinct pairs, and each from a portrait, was manifestly a work of the imagination. I was there, and to tell the truth, it was rather a huddled matter. The spaces did not seem to admit of majestic grouping, and as three of these chief personages had the gout, the sticks of these lame gentlemen were to my eyes very conspicuous. The bevy had not room enough,

and the ladies in the crush seemed to feel the intense heat. Something had made the Bishop cross. I am told that Lady Amaldina had determined not to be hurried, while the Bishop was due at an afternoon meeting at three. The artist, in creating the special work of art, had soared boldly into the ideal. In depicting the buffet of presents and the bridal feast, he may probably have been more accurate. I was not myself present. The youthful appearance of the bridegroom as he rose to make his speech may probably be attributed to a poetic license, permissible, nay laudable, nay necessary on such an occasion. The buffet of presents no doubt was all there; though it may be doubted whether the contributions from Royalty were in truth so conspicuous as they were made to appear. There were speeches spoken by two or three Foreign Ministers, and one by the bride's father. But the speech which has created most remark was from the bridegroom. "I hope we may be as happy as your kind wishes would have us," said he;—and then he sat down. It was declared afterwards that these were the only words which passed his lips on the occasion. To those who congratulated him he merely gave his hand and bowed, and yet he looked to be neither fluttered nor ill at ease. We know how a brave man will sit and have his tooth taken out, without a sign of pain on his brow,—trusting to the relief which is to come to him. So it was with Lord Llwdydlw. It might, perhaps, have saved pain if, as Lady Amaldina had said, chloroform could have been used.

"Well, my dear, it is done at last," Lady Persiflage said to her daughter, when the bride was taken into some chamber for the readjustment of her dress.

"Yes, mamma, it is done now."

"And are you happy?"

"Certainly I am. I have got what I wanted."

"And you can love him?" Coming from Lady Persiflage this did seem to be romantic; but she had been stirred up to some serious thoughts as she remembered that she was now surrendering to a husband the girl whom she had made, whom she had tutored, whom she had prepared either for the good or for the evil performance of the duties of life.

"Oh, yes, mamma," said Lady Amaldina. It is so often the case that the pupils are able to exceed the teaching of their tutors! It was so in this case. The mother, as she saw her girl given up to a silent middle-aged unattractive man, had her misgivings; but not so the daughter herself. She had looked at it all round, and had resolved that she could do her duty—under certain stipulations which she thought would be accorded to her. "He has more to say for himself than you think;—only he won't trouble himself to make assertions. And if he is not very much in love, he likes me better than anybody else, which goes a long way." Her mother blessed her, and led her away into a room where she joined her husband in order that she might be then taken down to the carriage.

The bride herself had not quite understood what was to take place, and was surprised to find herself quite alone for a moment with her husband. "My wife," he said; "now kiss me."

She ran into his arms and put up her face to him. "I thought you were going to forget that," she said, as he held her for a moment with his arm round her waist.

"I could not dare," he said, "to handle all that gorgeous drapery of lace. You were dressed up then for an exhibition. You look now as my wife ought to look."

"It had to be done, Llwdytlw."

"I make no complaint, dearest. I only say that I like you better as you are, as a girl to kiss, and to embrace, and to talk to, and to make my own." Then she curtsied to him prettily, and kissed him again; and after that they walked out arm-in-arm down to the carriage.

There were many carriages drawn up within the quadrangle of which the Foreign Office forms a part, but the carriage which was to take the bride and the bridegroom away was allowed a door to itself,—at any rate till such time as they should have been taken away. An effort had been made to keep the public out of the quadrangle; but as the duties of the four Secretaries of State could not be suspended, and as the great gates are supposed to make a public thoroughfare, this could only be done to a certain extent. The crowd, no doubt, was thicker out in Downing Street, but there were very many standing within the square. Among these there was one, beautifully arrayed in frock coat and yellow gloves, almost as though he himself was prepared for his own wedding. When Lord Llwdytlw brought Lady Amaldina out from the building and handed her into the carriage, and when the husband and wife had seated themselves, the well-dressed individual raised his hat from his head, and greeted them. "Long life and happiness to the bride of Castle Hautboy!" said he at the top of his voice. Lady Amaldina could not but see the man, and, recognizing him, she bowed.

It was Crocker,—the irrepressible Crocker. He had been also in the church. The narrator and he had managed to find standing room in a back pew under one of the galleries. Now would he be able to say with perfect truth that he had been at the wedding, and had received a parting salute from the bride;

whom he had known through so many years of her infancy. He probably did believe that he was entitled to count the future Duchess of Merioneth among his intimate friends.

CHAPTER XXIX.

CROCKER'S TALE.

A THING difficult to get is the thing mostly prized, not the thing that is valuable. Two or three additional Kimberley mines found somewhere among the otherwise uninteresting plains of South Africa would bring down the price of diamonds amazingly. It could hardly have been the beauty, or the wit, or the accomplishments of Clara Demijohn which caused Mr. Tribbledale to triumph so loudly and with so genuine an exultation, telling all Broad Street of his success, when he had succeeded in winning the bride who had once promised herself to Crocker. Were it not that she had all but slipped through his fingers he would never surely have thought her to be worthy of such a pæan. Had she come to his first whistle he might have been contented enough,—as are other ordinary young men with their ordinary young women. He would probably have risen to no enthusiasm of passion. But as things had gone he was as another Paris who had torn a Helen from her Menelaus,—only in this case an honest Paris, with a correct Helen, and from a Menelaus who had not as yet made good his claim. But the subject was worthy of another Iliad, to be followed by another Æneid. By his bow and his spear he had torn her from the arms of a usurping lover, and now made her all his own. Another man would have fainted and abandoned the contest, when rejected as he had been. But he had continued the fight, even

when lying low on the dust of the arena. He had nailed his flag to the mast when all his rigging had been cut away;—and at last he had won the battle. Of course his Clara was doubly dear to him, having been made his own after such difficulties as these.

"I'm not one of those who easily give way in an affair of the heart," he said to Mr. Littlebird, the junior partner in the firm, when he told that gentleman of his engagement.

"So I perceive, Mr. Tribbledale."

"When a man has set his affection on a young lady,—that is, his real affection,—he ought to stick to it,—or die." Mr. Littlebird, who was the happy father of three or four married and marriageable daughters, opened his eyes with surprise. The young men who had come after his young ladies had been pressing enough, but they had not died. "Or die!" repeated Tribbledale. "It is what I should have done. Had she become Mrs. Crocker, I should never again have been seen in the Court,"—"the Court" was the little alley in which Pogson and Littlebird's office was held,—“unless they had brought my dead body here to be identified.” He was quite successful in his enthusiasm. Though Mr. Littlebird laughed when he told the story to Mr. Pogson, not the less did they agree to raise his salary to £100 on and from the day of his marriage.

"Yes, Mr. Fay," he said to the poor old Quaker, who had lately been so broken by his sorrow as hardly to be as much master of Tribbledale as he used to be. "I have no doubt I shall be steady now. If anything can make a young man steady it is—success in love."

"I hope thou wilt be happy, Mr. Tribbledale."

"I shall be happy enough now. My heart will be more in the business,—what there isn't of it at any rate

with that dear creature in our mutual home at Islington. It was lucky about his having taken those lodgings, because Clara had got as it were used to them. And there are one or two things, such as a clock and the like, which need not be moved. If anything ever should happen to you, Mr. Fay, Pogson and Littlebird will find me quite up to the business."

"Something will happen some day, no doubt," said the Quaker.

On one occasion Lord Hampstead was in the Court having a word to say to Marion's father, or, perhaps, a word to hear. "I'm sure you'll excuse me, my lord," said Tribbledale, following him out of the office.

"Oh, yes," said Hampstead, with a smile,—for he had been there often enough to have made some acquaintance with the junior clerk. "If there be anything I can do for you, I will do it willingly."

"Only just to congratulate me, my lord. You have heard of—Crocker?" Lord Hampstead owned that he had heard of Crocker. "He has been interfering with me in the tenderest of parts." Lord Hampstead looked serious. "There is a young woman"—the poor victim frowned, he knew not why; but remitted his frown and smiled again; "who had promised herself to me. Then that rude assailant came and upset all my joy." Here, as the narrator paused, Lord Hampstead owned to himself that he could not deny the truth of the description. "Perhaps," continued Tribbledale,—“perhaps you have seen Clara Demijohn.” Lord Hampstead could not remember having been so fortunate. "Because I am aware that your steps have wandered in the way of Paradise Row." Then there came the frown again,—and then the smile. "Well;—perhaps it may be that a more perfect form of feminine beauty may be ascribed to an-

other." This was intended as a compliment, more civil than true, paid to Marion Fay on Lord Hampstead's behalf. "But for a combination of chastity and tenderness I don't think you can easily beat Clara Demijohn." Lord Hampstead bowed, as showing his readiness to believe such a statement coming from so good a judge. "For awhile the interloper prevailed. Interlopers do prevail;—such is the female heart. But the true rock shows itself always at last. She is the true rock on which I have built the castle of my happiness."

"Then I may congratulate you, Mr. Tribbledale."

"Yes;—and not only that, my lord. But Crocker is nowhere. You must own that there is a triumph in that. There was a time! Oh! how I felt it. There was a time when he triumphed; when he talked of 'my Clara,' as though I hadn't a chance. He's up a tree now, my lord. I thought I'd just tell you as you are so friendly, coming among us, here, my lord!" Lord Hampstead again congratulated him, and expressed a hope that he might be allowed to send the bride a small present.

"Oh, my lord," said Tribbledale, "it shall go with the clock and the harmonium, and shall be the proudest moment of my life."

When Miss Demijohn heard that the salary of Pogson and Littlebird's clerk,—she called it "Dan's screw" in speaking of the matter to her aunt,—had been raised to £160 per annum, she felt that there could be no excuse for a further change. Up to that moment it had seemed to her that Tribbledale had obtained his triumph by a deceit which it still might be her duty to frustrate. He had declared positively that those fatal words had been actually written in the book, "Dismissal—B. B." But she had learned that the words had not been written as yet. All is fair in love and war. She was not in the

least angry with Tribbledale because of his little ruse. A lie told in such a cause was a merit. But not on that account need she be led away by it from her own most advantageous course. In spite of the little quarrel which had sprung up between herself and Crocker, Crocker, still belonging to Her Majesty's Civil Service, must be better than Tribbledale. But when she found that Tribbledale's statement as to the £160 was true, and when she bethought herself that Crocker would probably be dismissed sooner or later, then she determined to be firm. As to the £160, old Mrs. Demijohn herself went to the office, and learned the truth from Zachary Fay. "I think he is a good young man," said the Quaker, "and he will do very well if he will cease to think quite so much of himself." To this Mrs. Demijohn remarked that half-a-dozen babies might probably cure that fault.

So the matter was settled, and it came to pass that Daniel Tribbledale and Clara Demijohn were married at Holloway on that very Thursday which saw completed the alliance which had been so long arranged between the noble houses of Powell and De Hauteville. There were two letters written on the occasion which shall be given here as showing the willingness to forget and forgive which marked the characters of the two persons. A day or two before the marriage the following invitation was sent;—

"DEAR SAM,—

"I hope you will quite forget what is past, at any rate what was unpleasant, and come to our wedding on Thursday. There is to be a little breakfast here afterwards, and I am sure that Dan will be very happy to shake your hand. I have asked him, and he says that

as he is to be the bridegroom he would be proud to have you as best man.

"Your old sincere friend

"CLARA DEMING, — for the present."

The answer was as follows:—

"DEAR CLARA,—

"There's no malice in me. Since our little tiff I have been thinking that, after all, I'm not the man for matrimony. To sip the honey from many flowers is, perhaps, after all my line of life. I should have been happy to be Dan Tribbledale's bottle-holder, but that there is another affair coming off which I must attend. Our Lady Amaldina is to be married, and I must be there. Our families have been connected, as you know, for a great many years, and I could not forgive myself if I did not see her turned off. No other consideration would have prevented me from accepting your very kind invitation.

"Your loving old friend,

"SAM CROCKER.

There did come a pang of regret across Clara's heart, as she read this as to the connection of the families. Of course Crocker was lying. Of course it was an empty boast. But there was a savour of aristocracy even in the capability of telling such a lie. Had she made Crocker her husband she also would have been able to drag Castle Hautboy into her daily conversations with Mrs. Duffer.

At the time of these weddings, the month of August, Æolus had not even yet come to a positive and actual decision as to Crocker's fate. Crocker had been suspended;—by which act he had been temporarily ex-

pelled from the office, so that his time was all his own to do what he pleased with it. Whether when suspended he would receive his salary, no one knew as a certainty. The presumption was that a man suspended would be dismissed,—unless he could succeed in explaining away or diminishing the sin of which he had been supposed to be guilty. *Aolus* himself could suspend, but it required an act on the part of the senior officer to dismiss,—or even to deprive the sinner of any part of his official emoluments. There had been no explanation possible. No diminishing of the sin had been attempted. It was acknowledged on all sides that Crocker had,—as Miss Demijohn properly described it,—destroyed Her Majesty's Mail papers. In order that unpardonable delay and idleness might not be traced home to him, he had torn into fragments a bundle of official documents. His character was so well known that no one doubted his dismissal. Mr. Jerningham had spoken of it as a thing accomplished. Bobbin and Geraghty had been congratulated on their rise in the department. "Dismissal—B. B." had been recorded, if not in any official book, at any rate in all official minds. But B. B. himself had as yet decided nothing. When Crocker attended Lady Amaldina's wedding in his best coat and gloves he was still under suspension; but trusting to the conviction that after so long a reprieve capital punishment would not be carried out.

Sir Boreas Bodkin had shoved the papers on one side, and, since that, nothing further had been said on the matter. Weeks had passed, but no decision had been made public. Sir Boreas was a man whom the subordinates nearest to him did not like to remind as to any such duty as this. When a case was "shoved on one side" it was known to be something unpalatable. And

yet, as Mr. Jerningham whispered to George Roden, it was a thing that ought to be settled. "He can't come back, you know," he said.

"I dare say he will," said the Duca.

"Impossible! I look upon it as impossible!" This Mr. Jerningham said very seriously.

"There are some people, you know," rejoined the other, "whose bark is so much worse than their bite."

"I know there are, Mr. Roden, and Sir Boreas is perhaps one of them; but there are cases in which to pardon the thing done seems to be perfectly impossible. This is one of them. If papers are to be destroyed with impunity, what is to become of the Department? I for one should not know how to go on with my duties. Tearing up papers! Good Heavens! When I think of it I doubt whether I am standing on my head or my heels."

This was very strong language for Mr. Jerningham, who was not accustomed to find fault with the proceedings of his superiors. He went about the office all these weeks with a visage of woe and the air of a man conscious that some great evil was at hand. Sir Boreas had observed it, and knew well why that visage was so long. Nevertheless when his eyes fell on that bundle of papers,—on the Crocker bundle of papers,—he only pushed it a little further out of sight than it was before.

Who does not know how odious a letter will become by being shoved on one side day after day? Answer it at the moment, and it will be nothing. Put it away unread, or at least undigested, for a day, and it at once begins to assume ugly proportions. When you have been weak enough to let it lie on your desk, or worse again, hidden in your breast-pocket, for a week or ten days, it will have become an enemy so strong and so odious that you will not dare to attack it. It throws a gloom over

all your joys. It makes you cross to your wife, severe to the cook, and critical to your own wine-cellar. It becomes the Black Care which sits behind you when you go out a riding. You have neglected a duty, and have put yourself in the power of perhaps some vulgar snarler. You think of destroying it and denying it, dishonestly and falsely,—as Crocker did the mail papers. And yet you must bear yourself all the time as though there were no load lying near your heart. So it was with our Æolus and the Crocker papers. The papers had become a great bundle. The unfortunate man had been called upon for an explanation, and had written a blundering long letter on a huge sheet of foolscap paper,—which Sir Boreas had not read, and did not mean to read. Large fragments of the torn “mail papers” had been found, and were all there. Mr. Jerningham had written a well-worded lengthy report,—which never certainly would be read. There were former documents in which the existence of the papers had been denied. Altogether the bundle was big and unholy and distasteful. Those who knew our Æolus well were sure that he would never even undo the tape by which the bundle was tied. But something must be done. One month’s pay-day had already passed since the suspension, and the next was at hand. “Can anything be settled about Mr. Crocker?” asked Mr. Jerningham, one day about the end of August. Sir Boreas had already sent his family to a little place he had in the West of Ireland, and was postponing his holiday because of this horrid matter. Mr. Jerningham could never go away till Æolus went. Sir Boreas knew all this, and was thoroughly ashamed of himself. “Just speak to me about it to-morrow and we’ll settle the matter,” he said, in his blandest voice. Mr. Jerningham retreated from the room frowning. According to his

thinking there ought to be nothing to settle. "D—— the fellow," said Sir Boreas, as soon as the door was closed; and he gave the papers another shove which sent them off the huge table on to the floor. Whether it was Mr. Jerningham or Crocker who was damned, he hardly knew himself. Then he was forced to stoop to the humility of picking up the bundle.

That afternoon he roused himself. About three o'clock he sent, not for Mr. Jerningham, but for the Duca. When Roden entered the room the bundle was before him, but not opened. "Can you send for this man and get him here to-day?" he asked. The Duca promised that he would do his best. "I can't bring myself to recommend his dismissal," he said. The Duca only smiled. "The poor fellow is just going to be married, you know." The Duca smiled again. Living in Paradise Row himself, he knew that the lady, *née* Clara Demijohn, was already the happy wife of Mr. Tribble-dale. But he knew also that after so long an interval Crocker could not well be dismissed, and he was not ill-natured enough to rob his chief of so good an excuse. He left the room, therefore, declaring that he would cause Crocker to be summoned immediately.

Crocker was summoned, and came. Had Sir Boreas made up his mind briefly to dismiss the man, or briefly to forgive him, the interview would have been unnecessary. As things now were the man could not certainly be dismissed. Sir Boreas was aware of that. Nor could he be pardoned without further notice. Crocker entered the room with that mingling of the bully and the coward in his appearance which is generally the result when a man who is overawed attempts to show that he is not afraid. Sir Boreas passed his fingers through the hair on each side of his head, frowned hard, and, blowing

through his nostrils, became at once the *Æolus* that he had been named;

Assumes the god,
Affects to nod,
And seems to shake the spheres.

"Mr. Crocker," said the god, laying his hand on the bundle of papers still tied up in a lump. Then he paused and blew the wrath out of his nostrils.

"Sir Boreas, no one can be more sorry for an accident than I am for that."

"An accident!"

"Well, Sir Boreas; I am afraid I shall not make you understand it all."

"I don't think you will."

"The first paper I did tear up by accident, thinking it was something done with."

"Then you thought you might as well send the others after it."

"One or two were torn by accident. Then——"

"Well!"

"I hope you'll look it over this time, Sir Boreas."

"I have done nothing but look it over, as you call it, since you came into the Department. You've been a disgrace to the office. You're of no use whatsoever. You give more trouble than all the other clerks put together. I'm sick of hearing your name."

"If you'll try me again I'll turn over a new leaf, Sir Boreas."

"I don't believe it for a moment. They tell me you're just going to be married." Crocker was silent. Could he be expected to cut the ground from under his own feet at such a moment? "For the young lady's sake, I don't like turning you adrift on the world at

such a time. I only wish that she had a more secure basis for her happiness."

"She'll be all right," said Crocker. He will probably be thought to have been justified in carrying on the delusion at such a crisis of his life.

"But you must take my assurance of this," said Æolus, looking more like the god of storms, "that no wife or baby,—no joy or trouble,—shall save you again if you again deserve dismissal." Crocker with his most affable smile thanked Sir Boreas and withdrew. It was said afterwards that Sir Boreas had seen and read that smile on Roden's face, had put two and two together in regard to him, and had become sure that there was to be no marriage. But, had he lost that excuse, where should he find another?

CHAPTER XXX.

"MY MARION."

THE blow came very suddenly at last. About the middle of September the spirit of Marion Fay flitted away from all its earthly joys and all its earthly troubles. Lord Hampstead saw her alive for the last time at that interview which was described a few pages back. Whenever he proposed to go down again to Pegwell Bay some objection was made, either by the Quaker or by Mrs. Roden on the Quaker's behalf. The doctor, it was alleged, had declared that such visits were injurious to his patient,—or perhaps it was that Marion had herself said that she was unable to bear the excitement. There was, no doubt, some truth in this. And Marion had seen that though she herself could enjoy the boundless love which her lover tendered to her, telling herself that though it was only for a while, it was very sweet to have

it so, yet for him these meetings were full of agony. But in addition to this there was, I think, a jealousy on the part of Zachary Fay as to his daughter. When there was still a question whether the young lord should be his son-in-law, he had been willing to give way and to subordinate himself, even though his girl were the one thing left to him in all the world. While there was an idea that she should be married, there had accompanied that idea a hope, almost an expectation, that she might live. But when it was brought home to him as a fact that her marriage was out of the question because her life was waning, then unconsciously there grew up in his heart a feeling that the young lord ought not to rob him of what was left. Had Marion insisted, he would have yielded. Had Mrs. Roden told him that it was cruel to separate them, he would have groaned and given way. As it was, he simply leaned to that view of the matter which gave him the greatest preponderance with his own child. It may be that she saw it too, and would not wound him by asking for her lover's presence.

About the middle of September she died, having written to Hampstead the very day before her death. Her letters lately had become but a few words each, which Mrs. Roden would put into an envelope and send to their destination. He wrote daily, assuring her that he would not leave his home for a day in order that he might go to her instantly when she would send for him. To the last she never gave up the idea of seeing him again;—but at last the little light flickered out quicker than had been expected.

Mrs. Roden was at Pegwell Bay when the end came, and to her fell the duty of making it known to Lord Hampstead. She went up to town immediately, leaving the Quaker in the desolate cottage, and sent down a

note from Holloway to Hendon Hall. "I must see you as soon as possible. Shall I go to you, or will you come to me?" When she wrote the words she was sure that he would understand their purport, and yet it was easier to write so than to tell the cruel truth plainly. The note was sent down by a messenger, but Lord Hampstead in person was the answer.

There was no need of any telling. When he stood before her dressed from head to foot in black, she took him by the two hands and looked into his face. "It is all over for her," he said,—“the trouble and the anguish, and the sense of long dull days to come. My Marion! How infinitely she has the best of it! How glad I ought to be that it is so.”

"You must wait, Lord Hampstead," she said.

"Pray, pray, let me have no consolation. Waiting in the sense you mean there will be none. For the one relief which will finally come to me I must of course wait. Did she say any word that you would wish to tell me?"

"Many, many."

"Were they for my ears?"

"What other words should she have spoken to me? They were prayers for your health."

"My health needs not her prayers."

"Prayers for your soul's health."

"Such praying will be efficacious there,—or would be were anything needed to make her fit for those angels among whom she has gone. For me they can do nothing,—unless it be that in knowing how much she loved me I may strive to be as she was."

"And for your happiness."

"Psha!" he exclaimed.

"You must let me do her commission, Lord Hamp-

stead. I was to bid you remember that God in His goodness has ordained that the dead after awhile shall be remembered only with a softened sorrow. I was to tell you that as a man you should give your thoughts to other things. It is not from myself;—it is from her.”

“She did not know. She did not understand. As regards good and evil she was, to my eyes, perfect;—perfect as she was in beauty, in grace, and feminine tenderness. But the character of others she had not learned to read. But I need not trouble you as to that, Mrs. Roden. You have been good to her as though you were her mother, and I will love you for it while I live.” Then he was going away; but he turned again to ask some question as to the funeral. Might he do it. Mrs. Roden shook her head. “But I shall be there?” To this she assented, but explained to him that Zachary Fay would admit of no interference with that which he considered to be his own privilege and his own duty.

Lord Hampstead had driven himself over from Hendon Hall, and had driven fast. When he left Mrs. Roden’s house the groom was driving the dog-cart up and down Paradise Row, waiting for his master. But the master walked on out of the Row, forgetting altogether the horse and the cart and the man, not knowing whither he was going.

The blow had come, and though it had been fully expected, though he had known well that it was coming, it struck him now as hard, almost harder than if it had not been expected. It seemed to himself that he was unable to endure his sorrow now because he had been already weakened by such a load of sorrow. Because he had grieved so much, he could not now bear this further grief. As he walked on he beat his hands

about, unconscious that he was in the midst of men and women who were gazing at him in the streets. There was nothing left to him,—nothing, nothing, nothing! He felt that if he could rid himself of his titles, rid himself of his wealth, rid himself of the very clothes upon his back, it would be better for him, so that he might not seem to himself to think that comfort could be found in externals. "Marion," he said, over and over again, in little whispered words, but loud enough for his own ears to hear the sound. And then he uttered phrases which were almost fantastic in their woe, but which declared what was and had been the condition of his mind towards her since she had become so inexpressibly dear to him. "My wife," he said, "my own one! Mother of my children. My woman; my countess; my princess. They should have seen. They should have acknowledged. They should have known whom it was that I had brought among them;—of what nature should be the woman whom a man should set in a high place. I had made my choice;—and then that it should come to this!" "There is no good to be done," he said again. "It all turns to ashes and to dust. The low things of the world are those which prevail." "Oh, Marion, that I could be with you! Though it were to be nowhere,—though the great story should have no pathetic ending, though the last long eternal chapter should be a blank,—still to have wandered away with you would have been something." As soon as he reached his house he walked straight into the drawing-room, and having carefully closed the door, he took the poker in his hand and held it clasped there as something precious. "It is the only thing of mine," he said, "that she has touched. Even then I swore to myself that this hearth should be her hearth; that here we

would sit together, and be one flesh and one bone." Then surreptitiously he took the bit of iron away with him, and hid it among his treasures,—to the subsequent dismay of the housemaid.

There came to him a summons from the Quaker to the funeral, and on the day named, without saying a word to any one, he took the train and went down to Pegwell Bay. From the moment on which the messenger had come from Mrs. Roden he had dressed himself in black, and he now made no difference in his garments. Poor Zachary said but little to him; but that little was very bitter. "It has been so with all of them," he said. "They have all been taken. The Lord cannot strike me again now." Of the highly-born stranger's grief, or of the cause which brought him there, he had not a word to say; nor did Lord Hampstead speak of his own sorrow. "I sympathize and condole with you," he said to the old man. The Quaker shook his head, and after that there was silence between them till they parted. To the few others who were there Lord Hampstead did not address himself, nor did they to him. From the grave, when the clod of earth had been thrown on it, he walked slowly away, without a sign on his face of that agony which was rending his heart. There was a carriage there to take him to the railway, but he only shook his head when he was invited to enter it. He walked off and wandered about for hours, till he thought that the graveyard would be deserted. Then he returned, and when he found himself alone he stood over the newly heaped-up soil. "Marion," he said to himself over and over again, whispering as he stood there. "Marion,—Marion; my wife; my woman." As he stood by the grave side, one came softly stealing up to him, and laid a hand upon his shoulder. He turned round

quickly, and saw that it was the bereaved father. "Mr. Fay," he said, "we have both lost the only thing that either of us valued."

"What is it to thee, who are young, and hardly knew her twelve months since?"

"Months make no difference, I think."

"But old age, my lord, and childishness, and solitude——"

"I, too, am alone."

"She was my daughter, my own. Thou hadst seen a pretty face, and that was all. She had remained with me when those others died. Had thou not come——"

"Did my coming kill her, Mr. Fay?"

"I do not say that. Thou hast been good to her, and I would not say a hard word to thee."

"I did think that nothing could have added to my sorrow."

"No, my lord; no, no. She would have died. She was her dear mother's child, and she was doomed. Go away, and be thankful that thou, too, hast not become the father of children born only to perish in your sight. I will not say an unkind word, but I would wish to have my girl's grave to myself." Upon this Lord Hampstead walked off, and went back to his own home, hardly knowing how he reached it.

It was a month after this that he returned to the churchyard, and might have been seen sitting on the small stone slab which the Quaker had already caused to be laid over the grave. It was a fine October evening, and the sombre gloom of the hours was already darkening everything around. He had crept into the enclosure silently, almost slyly, so as to insure himself that his presence should not be noted; and now, made confident by the coming darkness, he had seated himself

on the stone. During the long hours that he sat there no word was formed within his lips, but he surrendered himself entirely to thoughts of what his life might have been had she been spared to him. He had come there for a purpose, the very opposite of that; but how often does it come to pass that we are unable to drive our thoughts into that channel in which we wish them to flow? He had thought much of her last words, and was minded to attempt to do something as she would have had him do it;—not that he might enjoy his life, but that he might make it useful. But as he sat there, he could not think of the real future,—not of the future as it might be made to take this or that form by his own efforts; but of the future as it would have been had she been with him, of the glorious, bright, beautiful future which her love, her goodness, her beauty, her tenderness would have illuminated.

Till he had seen her his heart had never been struck. Ideas, sufficiently pleasant in themselves, though tinged with a certain irony and sarcasm, had been frequent with him as to his future career. He would leave that building up of a future family of Marquises,—if future Marquises there were to be,—to one of those young darlings whose bringing-up would manifestly fit them for the work. For himself he would perhaps philosophize, perhaps do something that might be of service,—would indulge at any rate his own views as to humanity;—but he would not burden himself with a Countess and a nursery full of young lords and ladies. He had often said to Roden, had often said to Vivian, that her ladyship, his stepmother, need not trouble herself. He certainly would not be guilty of making either a Countess or a Marchioness. They, of course, had laughed at him, and had bid him bide his time. He had bided his

time,—as they had said,—and Marion Fay had been the result.

Yes;—life would have been worth the having if Marion Fay had remained to him. It was thus he communed with himself as he sat there on the tomb. From the moment in which he had first seen her in Mrs. Roden's house he had felt that things were changed with him. There had come a vision before him which filled him full of delight. As he learned to know the tones of her voice, and the motion of her limbs, and to succumb to the feminine charms with which she enveloped him, all the world was brightened up to his view. Here there was no pretence of special blood, no assumption of fantastic titles, no claim to superiority because of fathers and mothers who were in themselves by no means superior to their neighbours. And yet there had been all the grace, all the loveliness, all the tenderness, without which his senses would not have been captivated. He had never known his want;—but he had in truth wanted one who should be at all points a lady, and yet not insist on a right to be so esteemed on the strength of inherited privileges. Chance, good fortune, providence had sent her to him,—or more probably the eternal fitness of things, as he had allowed himself to argue when things had fallen out so well to his liking. Then there had arisen difficulties, which had seemed to him to be vain and absurd,—though they would not allow themselves to be at once swept away. They had talked to him of his station and of hers, making that an obstacle which to him had been a strong argument in favour of her love. Against this he had done battle with the resolute purpose which a man has who is sure of his cause. He would have none of their sophistries, none of their fears, none of their old-

fashioned absurdities. Did she love him? Was her heart to him as was his to her? That was the one question on which it must all depend. As he thought of it all, sitting there on the tombstone, he put out his arm as though to fold her form to his bosom when he thought of the moment in which he became sure that it was so. There had been no doubt of the full-flowing current of her love. Then he had aroused himself, and had shaken his mane like a lion, and had sworn aloud that this vain obstacle should be no obstacle, even though it was pleaded by herself. Nature had been strong enough within him to assure him that he would overcome the obstacle.

And he had overcome it,—or was overcoming it,—when that other barrier gradually presented itself, and loomed day by day terribly large before his affrighted eyes. Even to that he would not yield,—not only as regarded her but himself also. Had there been no such barrier, the possession of Marion would have been to him an assurance of perfect bliss which the prospect of far-distant death would not have effected. When he began to perceive that her condition was not as that of other young women, he became aware of a great danger,—of a danger to himself as well as to her, to himself rather than to her. This increased rather than diminished his desire for the possession. As the ardent rider will be more intent to take the fence when it looms before him large and difficult, so with him the resolution to make Marion his wife became the stronger when he knew that there were reasons of prudence, reasons of caution, reasons of worldly wisdom, why he should not do so. It had become a religion to him that she should be his one. Then gradually her strength had become known to him, and slowly he was made aware that he

must bow to her decision. All that he wanted in all the world he must not have,—not that the love which he craved was wanting, but because she knew that her own doom was fixed.

She had bade him retriick his beams, and take the light and the splendour of his sun elsewhere. The light and the splendour of his sun had all passed from him. She had absorbed them altogether. He, while he had been boasting to himself of his power and his manliness, in that he would certainly overcome all the barriers, had found himself to be weak as water in her hands. She, in her soft feminine tones, had told him what duty had required of her, and, as she had said so she had done. Then he had stood on one side, and had remained looking on, till she had—gone away and left him. She had never been his. It had not been allowed to him even to write his name, as belonging also to her, on the gravestone.

But she had loved him. There was nothing in it all but this to which his mind could revert with any feeling of satisfaction. She had certainly loved him. If such love might be continued between a disembodied spirit and one still upon the oarth,—if there were any spirit capable of love after that divorce between the soul and the body,—her love certainly would still be true to him. Most assuredly his should be true to her. Whatever he might do towards obeying her in striving to form some manly purpose for his life, he would never ask another woman to be his wife, he would never look for other love. The black coat should be laid aside as soon as might be, so that the world around him should not have cause for remark; but the mourning should never be taken from his heart.

Then, when the darkness of night had quite come

upon him, he arose from his seat, and flinging himself on his knees, stretched his arms wildly across the grave. "Marion," he said; "Marion; oh, Marion, will you hear me? Though gone from me, art thou not mine?" He looked up into the night, and there, before his eyes, was her figure, beautiful as ever, with all her loveliness of half-developed form, with her soft hair upon her shoulders; and her eyes beamed on him, and a heavenly smile came across her face, and her lips moved as though she would encourage him. "My Marion;—my wife!"

Very late that night the servants heard him as he opened the door and walked across the hall, and made his way up to his own room.

CHAPTER XXXI.

MR. GREENWOOD'S LAST BATTLE.

DURING the whole of that long summer nothing was absolutely arranged as to Roden and Lady Frances, though it was known to all London, and to a great many persons outside of London, that they were certainly to become man and wife. The summer was very long to Lord and Lady Trafford because of the necessity incumbent on them of remaining through the last dregs of the season on account of Lady Amaldina's marriage. Had Lady Amaldina thrown herself away on another Roden the aunt would have no doubt gone to the country; but her niece had done her duty in life with so much propriety and success that it would have been indecent to desert her. Lady Kingsbury therefore remained in Park Lane, and was driven to endure frequently the sight of the Post Office clerk.

For George Roden was admitted to the house even though it was at last acknowledged that he must be

George Roden, and nothing more. And it was found also that he must be a Post Office clerk, and nothing more. Lord Persiflage, on whom Lady Kingsbury chiefly depended for seeing that her own darlings should not be disgraced by being made brothers-in-law to anything so low as a clerk in the Post Office, was angry at last, and declared that it was impossible to help a man who would not help himself. "It is no use trying to pick a man up who will lie in the gutter." It was thus he spoke of Roden in his anger; and then the Marchioness would wring her hands and abuse her stepdaughter. Lord Persiflage did think that something might be done for the young man if the young man would only allow himself to be called a Duke. But the young man would not allow it, and Lord Persiflage did not see what could be done. Nevertheless there was a general idea abroad in the world that something would be done. Even the mysterious savour of high rank which attached itself to the young man would do something for him.

It may be remembered that the Marquis himself, when first the fact had come to his ears that his daughter loved the young man, had been almost as ferociously angry as his wife. He had assented to the carrying of her away to the Saxon castle. He had frowned upon her. He had been a party to the expelling her from his own house. But gradually his heart had become softened towards her; in his illness he had repented of his harshness; he had not borne her continued absence easily, and had of late looked about for an excuse for accepting her lover. When the man was discovered to be a Duke, though it was only an Italian Duke, of course he accepted him. Now his wife told him daily that Roden was not a Duke, because he would not accept his Dukedom,—and ought therefore again to

be rejected. Lord Persiflage had declared that nothing could be done for him, and therefore he ought to be rejected. But the Marquis clung to his daughter. As the man was absolutely a Duke, according to the laws of all the Heralds, and all the Courts, and all the tables of precedence and usages of peerage in Christendom, he could not de-grade himself even by any motion of his own. He was the eldest and the legitimate son of the last Duca di Crinola,—so the Marquis said,—and as such was a fitting aspirant for the hand of the daughter of an English peer. “But he hasn’t got a shilling,” said Lady Kingsbury weeping. The Marquis felt that it was within his own power to produce some remedy for this evil, but he did not care to say as much to his wife, who was tender on that point in regard to the interest of her three darlings. Roden continued his visits to Park Lane very frequently all through the summer, and had already arranged for an autumn visit to Castle Hautboy,—in spite of that angry word spoken by Lord Persiflage. Everybody knew he was to marry Lady Frances. But when the season was over, and all the world had flitted from London, nothing was settled.

Lady Kingsbury was of course very unhappy during all this time; but there was a source of misery deeper, more pressing, more crushing than even the Post Office clerk. Mr. Greenwood, the late chaplain, had, during his last interview with the Marquis, expressed some noble sentiments. He would betray nothing that had been said to him in confidence. He would do nothing that could annoy the Marchioness, because the Marchioness was a lady, and as such, entitled to all courtesy from him as a gentleman. There were grounds no doubt on which he could found a claim, but he would not insist on them, as his doing so would be distasteful to her lady-

ship. He felt that he was being ill-treated, almost robbed; but he would put up with that rather than say a word which would come against his own conscience as a gentleman. With these high assurances he took his leave of the Marquis as though he intended to put up with the beggarly stipend of £200 a year which the Marquis had promised him. Perhaps that had been his intention;—but before two days were over he had remembered that though it might be base to tell her ladyship's secrets, the penny-post was still open to him.

It certainly was the case that Lady Kingsbury had spoken to him with strong hopes of the death of the heir to the title. Mr. Greenwood, in discussing the matter with himself, went beyond that, and declared to himself that she had done so with expectation as well as hope. Fearful words had been said. So he assured himself. He thanked his God that nothing had come of it. Only for him something,—he assured himself,—would have come of it. The whisperings in that upstairs sitting-room at Trafford had been dreadful. He had divulged nothing. He had held his tongue,—like a gentleman. But ought he not to be paid for holding his tongue? There are so many who act honestly from noble motives, and then feel that their honesty should be rewarded by all those gains which dishonesty might have procured for them! About a fortnight after the visit which Mr. Greenwood made to the Marquis he did write a letter to the Marchioness. "I am not anxious," he said, "to do more than remind your ladyship of those peculiarly confidential discussions which took place between yourself and me at Trafford during the last winter; but I think you will acknowledge that they were of a nature to make me feel that I should not be discarded like an old glove. If you would tell his lordship that

something should be done for me, something would be done." Her ladyship when she received this was very much frightened. She remembered the expressions she had allowed herself to use, and did say a hesitating, halting word to her husband, suggesting that Mr. Greenwood's pension should be increased. The Marquis turned upon her in anger. "Did you ever promise him anything?" he asked. No;—she had promised him nothing. "I am giving him more than he deserves, and will do no more," said the Marquis. There was something in his voice which forbade her to speak another word.

Mr. Greenwood's letter having remained for ten days without an answer, there came another. "I cannot but think that you will acknowledge my right to expect an answer," he said, "considering the many years through which I have enjoyed the privilege of your ladyship's friendship, and the *very confidential terms* on which we have been used to discuss matters of the highest interest to us both." The "matters" had no doubt been the probability of the accession to the title of her own son through the demise of his elder brother! She understood now all her own folly, and something of her own wickedness. To this second appeal she wrote a short answer, having laid awake over it one entire night.

"DEAR MR. GREENWOOD—I have spoken to the Marquis, and he will do nothing.

"Yours truly,

"C. KINGSBURY."

This she did without saying a word to her husband.

Then, after the interval of a few days, there came a third letter.

"MY DEAR LADY KINGSBURY,—

"I cannot allow myself to think that this should be the end of it all, after so many years of social intimacy and confidential intercourse. Can you yourself imagine the condition of a gentleman of my age reduced after a life of ease and comfort to exist on a miserable pension of £200 a year? It simply means death,—death! Have I not a right to expect something better after the devotion of a life?

"Who has known as well as I the stumbling-blocks to your ladyship's ambition which have been found in the existences of Lord Hampstead and Lady Frances Trafford? I have sympathized with you no doubt,—partly because of their peculiarities, partly from sincere affection for your ladyship. It cannot surely be that your ladyship should now treat me as an enemy because I could do no more than sympathize!

"Dig I cannot. To beg I am ashamed. You will hardly wish that I should perish from want. I have not as yet been driven to open out my sad case to any one but yourself. Do not force me to it,—for the sake of those darling children for whose welfare I have ever been so anxious.

"Believe me to be,

"Your ladyship's most devoted and faithful friend,

"THOMAS GREENWOOD."

This epistle so frightened her that she began to consider how she might best collect together a sufficient sum of money to satisfy the man. She did succeed in sending him a note for £50. But this he was too wary to take. He returned it, saying that he could not, though steeped in poverty, accept chance eleemosynary aid. What he required,—and had he thought a right

to ask,—was an increase to the fixed stipend allowed him. He must, he thought, again force himself upon the presence of the Marquis, and explain the nature of the demand more explicitly.

Upon this Lady Kingsbury showed all the letters to her husband. "What does he mean by stumbling-blocks?" asked the Marquis in his wrath. Then there was a scene which was sad enough. She had to confess that she had spoken very freely to the chaplain respecting her step-children. "Freely! What does freely mean? Do you want them out of the way?" What a question for a husband to have to ask his wife! But she had a door by which she could partly escape. It was not that she had wanted them out of the way, but that she had been so horrified by what she had thought to be their very improper ideas as to their own rank of life. Those marriages which they had intended had caused her to speak as she had done to the chaplain. When alone at Trafford she had no doubt opened her mind to the clergyman. She rested a great deal on the undoubted fact that Mr. Greenwood was a clergyman. Hampstead and Fanny had been stumbling-blocks to her ambition because she had desired to see them married properly into proper families. She probably thought that she was telling the truth as she said all this. It was at any rate accepted as truth, and she was condoned. As to Hampstead, it was known by this time that that marriage could never take place; and as to Lady Frances, the Marchioness was driven, in her present misery, to confess, that as the Duca was in truth a Duca, his family must be held to be proper.

But the Marquis sent for Mr. Cumming, his London solicitor, and put all the letters into his hand,—with such explanation as he thought necessary to give. Mr.

Cumming at first recommended that the pension should be altogether stopped; but to this the Marquis did not consent. "It would not suit me that he should starve," said the Marquis. "But if he continues to write to her ladyship something must be done."

"Threatening letters to extort money!" said the lawyer confidently. "I can have him before a magistrate to-morrow, my lord, if it be thought well." It was, however, felt to be expedient that Mr. Cumming should in the first case send for Mr. Greenwood, and explain to that gentleman the nature of the law.

Mr. Cumming no doubt felt himself that it would be well that Mr. Greenwood should not starve, and well also that application should not be made to the magistrate, unless as a last resort. He, too, asked himself what was meant by "stumbling-blocks." Mr. Greenwood was a greedy rascal, descending to the lowest depth of villany with the view of making money out of the fears of a silly woman. But the silly woman, the lawyer thought, must have been almost worse than silly. It seemed natural to Mr. Cumming that a stepmother should be anxious for the worldly welfare of her own children;—not unnatural, perhaps, that she should be so anxious as to have a feeling at her heart amounting almost to a wish that "chance" should remove the obstacle. Chance, as Mr. Cumming was aware, could in such a case mean only—death. Mr. Cumming, when he put this in plain terms to himself, felt it to be very horrid; but there might be a doubt whether such a feeling would be criminal, if backed up by no deed and expressed by no word. But here it seemed that words had been spoken. Mr. Greenwood had probably invented that particular phrase, but would hardly have invented it unless something had been said to justify it.

It was his business, however, to crush Mr. Greenwood, and not to expose her ladyship. He wrote a very civil note to Mr. Greenwood. Would Mr. Greenwood do him the kindness to call in Bedford Row at such or such an hour,—or indeed at any other hour that might suit him. Mr. Greenwood thinking much of it, and resolving in his mind that any increase to his pension might probably be made through Mr. Cumming, did as he was bid, and waited upon the lawyer.

Mr. Cumming, when the clergyman was shown in, was seated with the letters before him,—the various letters which Mr. Greenwood had written to Lady Kingsbury,—folded out one over another, so that the visitor's eye might see them and feel their presence; but he did not intend to use them unless of necessity. "Mr. Greenwood," he said, "I learn that you are discontented with the amount of a retiring allowance which the Marquis of Kingsbury has made you on leaving his service."

"I am, Mr. Cumming; certainly I am.—£200 a year is not——"

"Let us call it £300, Mr. Greenwood."

"Well, yes; Lord Hampstead did say something——"

"And has paid something. Let us call it £300. Not that the amount matters. The Marquis and Lord Hampstead are determined not to increase it."

"Determined!"

"Quite determined that under no circumstances will they increase it. They may find it necessary to stop it."

"Is this a threat?"

"Certainly it is a threat,—as far as it goes. There is another threat which I may have to make for the sake of coercing you; but I do not wish to use it if I can do without it."

"Her ladyship knows that I am ill-treated in this matter. She sent me £50 and I returned it. It was not in that way that I wished to be paid for my services."

"It was well for you that you did. But for that I could not certainly have asked you to come and see me here."

"You could not?"

"No;—I could not. You will probably understand what I mean." Here Mr. Cumming laid his hands upon the letters, but made no other allusion to them. "A very few words more will, I think, settle all that there is to be arranged between us. The Marquis, from certain reasons of humanity,—with which I for one hardly sympathize in this case,—is most unwilling to stop, or even to lessen, the ample pension which is paid to you."

"Ample;—after a whole lifetime!"

"But he will do so if you write any further letters to any member of his family."

"That is tyranny, Mr. Cumming."

"Very well. Then is the Marquis a tyrant. But he will go further than that in his tyranny. If it be necessary to defend either himself or any of his family from further annoyance, he will do so by criminal proceedings. You are probably aware that the doing this would be very disagreeable to the Marquis. Undoubtedly it would. To such a man as Lord Kingsbury it is a great trouble to have his own name, or worse, that of others of his family, brought into a Police Court. But, if necessary, it will be done. I do not ask you for any assurance, Mr. Greenwood, because it may be well that you should take a little time to think of it. But unless you are willing to lose your income, and to be taken before a police magistrate for endeavouring to extort money by threatening letters, you had better hold your hand."

"I have never threatened."

"Good morning, Mr. Greenwood."

"Mr. Cumming, I have threatened no one."

"Good morning, Mr. Greenwood." Then the discarded chaplain took his leave, failing to find the words with which he could satisfactorily express his sense of the injury which had been done him.

Before that day was over he had made up his mind to take his £300 a year and be silent. The Marquis, he now found, was not so infirm as he had thought, nor the Marchioness quite so full of fears. He must give it up, and take his pittance. But in doing so he continued to assure himself that he was greatly injured, and did not cease to accuse Lord Kingsbury of sordid parsimony in refusing to reward adequately one whose services to the family had been so faithful and long-enduring.

It may, however, be understood that in the midst of troubles such as these Lady Kingsbury did not pass a pleasant summer.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE REGISTRAR OF STATE RECORDS.

ALTHOUGH Lord Persiflage had seemed to be very angry with the recusant Duke, and had made that uncivil speech about the gutter, still he was quite willing that George Roden should be asked down to Castle Hautboy. "Of course we must do something for him," he said to his wife; "but I hate scrupulous men. I don't blame him at all for making such a girl as Fanny fall in love with him. If I were a Post Office clerk I'd do the same if I could."

"Not you. You wouldn't have given yourself the trouble."

"But when I had done it I wouldn't have given her friends more trouble than was necessary. I should have known that they would have had to drag me up somewhere. I should have looked for that. But I shouldn't have made myself difficult when chance gave a helping hand. Why shouldn't he have taken his title?"

"Of course we all wish he would."

"Fanny is as bad as he is. She has caught some of Hampstead's levelling ideas and encourages the young man. It was all Kingsbury's fault from the first. He began the world wrong, and now he cannot get himself right again. A radical aristocrat is a contradiction in terms. It is very well that there should be Radicals. It would be a stupid do-nothing world without them. But a man can't be oil and vinegar at the same time." This was the expression made by Lord Persiflage of his general ideas on politics in reference to George Roden

and his connection with the Trafford family; but not the less was George Roden asked down to Castle Hautboy. Lady Frances was not to be thrown over because she had made a fool of herself,—nor was George Roden to be left out in the cold, belonging as he did now to Lady Frances. Lord Persiflage never approved very much of anybody,—but he never threw anybody over.

It was soon after the funeral of Marion Fay that Roden went down to Cumberland. During the last two months of Marion's illness Hampstead and Roden had been very often together. Not that they had lived together, as Hampstead had declared himself unable to bear continued society. His hours had been passed alone. But there had not been many days in which the friends had not seen each other for a few minutes. It had become a habit with Hampstead to ride over to Paradise Row when Roden had returned from the office. At first Mrs. Roden also had been there;—but latterly she had spent her time altogether at Pegwell Bay. Newertheless Lord Hampstead would come, and would say a few words, and would then ride home again. When all was over at Pegwell Bay, when the funeral was at hand, and during the few days of absolutely prostrating grief which followed it, nothing was seen of him;—but on the evening before his friend's journey down to Castle Hautboy he again appeared in the Row. On this occasion he walked over, and his friend returned with him a part of the way. "You must do something with yourself," Roden said to him.

"I see no need of doing anything special. How many men do nothing with themselves!"

"Men either work or play."

"I do not think I shall play much."

"Not for a time certainly. You used to play; but

I can imagine that the power of doing so will have deserted you."

"I shan't hunt, if you mean that."

"I do not mean that at all," said Roden;—"but that you should do something. There must be some occupation, or life will be insupportable."

"It is insupportable," said the young man looking away, so that his countenance should not be seen.

"But it must be supported. Let the load be ever so heavy, it must be carried. You would not destroy yourself?"

"No;"—said the other slowly; "no. I would not do that. If any one would do it for me!"

"No one will do it for you. Not to have some plan of active life, some defined labour by which the weariness of the time may be conquered, would be a weakness and a cowardice next door to that of suicide."

"Roden," said the lord, "your severity is brutal."

"The question is whether it be true. You shall call it what you like,—or call me what you like; but can you contradict what I say? Do you not feel that it is your duty as a man to apply what intellect you have, and what strength, to some purpose?"

Then, by degrees, Lord Hampstead did explain the purpose he had before him. He intended to have a yacht built, and start alone, and cruise about the face of the world. He would take books with him, and study the peoples and the countries which he visited.

"Alone?" asked Roden.

"Yes, alone;—as far as a man may be alone with a crew and a captain around him. I shall make acquaintances as I go, and shall be able to bear them as such. They will know nothing of my secret wound. Had I you with me,—you and my sister let us suppose,—or Vivian,

or any one from here who had known me, I could not even struggle to raise my head."

"It would wear off."

"I will go alone; and if occasion offers I will make fresh acquaintances. I will begin another life which shall have no connection with the old one,—except that which will be continued by the thread of my own memory. No one shall be near me who may even think of her name when my own ways and manners are called in question." He went on to explain that he would set himself to work at once. The ship must be built, and the crew collected, and the stores prepared. He thought that in this way he might find employment for himself till the spring. In the spring, if all was ready, he would start. Till that time came he would live at Hendon Hall,—still alone. He so far relented, however, as to say that if his sister was married before he began his wanderings he would be present at her marriage.

Early in the course of the evening he had explained to Roden that his father and he had conjointly arranged to give Lady Frances £40,000 on her wedding. "Can that be necessary?" asked Roden.

"You must live; and as you have gone into a nest with the drones, you must live in some sort as the drones do."

"I hope I shall never be a drone."

"You cannot touch pitch and not be defiled. You'll be expected to wear gloves and drink fine wine,—or, at any rate, to give it to your friends. Your wife will have to ride in a coach. If she don't people will point at her, and think she's a pauper, because she has a handle to her name. They talk of the upper ten thousand. It is as hard to get out from among them as it is to get in among them. Though you have been wonderfully stout about the Italian title, you'll find that it will stick to

you." Then it was explained that the money, which was to be given, would in no wise interfere with the "darlings." Whatever was to be added to the fortune which would naturally have belonged to Lady Frances, would come not from her father but from her brother.

When Roden arrived at Castle Hautboy Lord Persiflage was there, though he remained but for a day. He was due to be with the Queen for a month,—a duty which was evidently much to his taste, though he affected to frown over it as a hardship. "I am sorry, Roden," he said, "that I should be obliged to leave you and everybody else;—but a Government hack, you know, has to be a Government hack." This was rather strong from a Secretary of State to a Clerk in the Post Office; but Roden had to let it pass lest he should give an opening to some remark on his own repudiated rank. "I shall be back before you are gone, I hope, and then perhaps we may arrange something." The only thing that Roden wished to arrange was a day for his own wedding, as to which, as far as he knew, Lord Persiflage could have nothing to say.

"I don't think you ought to be sorry," Lady Frances said to her lover as they were wandering about on the mountains. He had endeavoured to explain to her that this large income which was now promised to him rather impeded than assisted the scheme of life which he had suggested to himself.

"Not sorry,—but disappointed, if you know the difference."

"Not exactly."

"I had wanted to feel that I should earn my wife's bread."

"So you shall. If a man works honestly for his living, I don't think he need inquire too curiously what

proportion of it may come from his own labour or from some other source. If I had had nothing we should have done very well without the coach,—as poor Hampstead calls it. But if the coach is there I don't see why we shouldn't ride in it."

"I should like to earn the coach too," said Roden.

"This, sir, will be a lesson serviceable in teaching you that you are not to be allowed to have your own way in everything."

An additional leave of absence for a month had been accorded to Roden. He had already been absent during a considerable time in the spring of the year, and in the ordinary course of events would not have been entitled to this prolonged indulgence. But there were reasons deemed to be sufficient. He was going to meet a Cabinet Minister. He was engaged to marry the daughter of a Marquis. And it was known that he was not simply George Roden, but in truth the Duca di Crinola. He had suffered some qualms of conscience as to the favour to be thus shown him, but had quieted them by the idea that when a man is in love something special ought to be done for him. He remained, therefore, till the Foreign Secretary returned from his royal service, and had by that time fixed the period of his marriage. It was to take place in the cold comfortless month of March. It would be a great thing, he had said, to have Hampstead present at it, and it was Hampstead's intention to start on his long travels early in April. "I don't see why people shouldn't be married in cold weather as well as in hot," said Vivian. "Brides need not go about always in muslin."

When Lord Persiflage returned to Castle Hautboy, he had his plan ready arranged for relieving his future half-nephew-in-law,—if there be such a relationship,—

from the ignominy of the Post Office. "I have Her Majesty's permission," he said to Roden, "to offer you the position of Registrar of State Records to the Foreign Office."

"Registrar of State Records to the Foreign Office!"

"Fifteen hundred a year," said his lordship, going off at once to this one point of true vital importance. "I am bound to say that I think I could have done better for you had you consented to bear the title, which is as completely your own, as is that mine by which I am called."

"Don't let us go back to that, my lord."

"Oh no;—certainly not. Only this; if you could be brought to think better of it,—if Fanny could be induced to make you think better of it,—the office now offered to you would, I think, be more comfortable to you."

"How so?"

"I can hardly explain, but it would. There is no reason on earth why it should not be held by an Italian. We had an Italian for many years librarian at the Museum. And as an Italian you would of course be entitled to call yourself by your hereditary title."

"I shall never be other than an Englishman."

"Very well. One man may lead a horse to water, but a thousand cannot make him drink. I only tell you what would be the case. The title would no doubt give a prestige to the new office. It is exactly that kind of work which would fall readily into the hands of a foreigner of high rank. One cannot explain these things, but it is so. The £1500 a year would more probably become £2000 if you submitted to be called by your own proper name." Everybody knew that Lord Persiflage understood the Civil Service of his country perfectly. He was a man who never worked very hard himself, or expected those under him to do so; but he liked com-

mon sense, and hated scruples, and he considered it to be a man's duty to take care of himself,—of himself first of all, and then, perhaps, afterwards, of the Service.

Neither did Roden nor did Lady Frances give way a bit the more for this. They were persistent in clinging to their old comparatively humble English name. Lady Frances would be Lady Frances to the end, but she would be no more than Lady Frances Roden. And George Roden would be George Roden, whether a clerk in the Post Office or Registrar of State Records to the Foreign Office. So much the next new bride declared with great energy to the last new bride who had just returned from her short wedding tour, having been hurried home so that her husband might be able to lay the first stone of the new bridge to be built over the Menai Straits. Lady Llwdytlw, with all the composed manners of a steady matron, was at Castle Hautboy, and used all her powers of persuasion. "Never mind, my dear, what he says," Lady Llwdytlw urged. "What you should think of is what will be good for him. He would be somebody,—almost as good as an Under Secretary of State,—with a title. He would get to be considered among the big official swells. There is so much in a name! Of course, you've got your rank. But you ought to insist on it for his sake."

Lady Frances did not give way in the least, nor did any one venture to call the Duca by his title, formally or openly. But, as Lord Hampstead had said, "it stuck to him." The women when they were alone with him would call him Duca, joking with him; and it was out of the question that he should be angry with them for their jokes. He became aware that behind his back he was always spoken of as The Duke, and that this was not done with any idea of laughing at him. The people

around him believed that he was a Duke and ought to be called a Duke. Of course it was in joke that Lady Llwdythlw always called Lady Frances Duchessina when they were together, because Lady Frances had certainly not as yet acquired her right to the name; but it all tended to the same point. He became aware that the very servants around him understood it. They did not call him "your grace" or "my Lord," or make spoken allusion to his rank; but they looked it. All that obsequiousness due to an hereditary nobleman, which is dear to the domestic heart, was paid to him. He found himself called upon by Lady Persiflage to go into the dining-room out of his proper place. There was a fair excuse for this while the party was small, and confined to few beyond the family, as it was expected that the two declared lovers should sit together. But when this had been done with a larger party he expostulated with his hostess. "My dear Mr. Roden," she said,—*"I suppose I must call you so."*

"It's my name at any rate."

"There are certain points on which, as far as I can see, a man may be allowed to have his way,—and certain points on which he may not."

"As to his own name——"

"Yes; on the matter of your name. I do not see my way how to get the better of you just at present, though on account of my near connection with Fanny I am very anxious to do so. But as to the fact of your rank, there it is. Whenever I see you,—and I hope I shall see you very often,—I shall always suppose that I see an Italian nobleman of the first class, and shall treat you so." He shrugged his shoulders, feeling that he had nothing else to do. "If I were to find myself in the society of some man calling himself by a title to which I knew that he

had no right,—I should probably call him by no name; but I should be very careful not to treat him as a nobleman, knowing that he had no right to be so treated. What can I do in your case but just reverse the position?”

He never went back to the Post Office,—of course. What should a Registrar of State Records to the Foreign Office do in so humble an establishment? He never went back for the purposes of work. He called to bid farewell to Sir Boreas, Mr. Jerningham, Crocker, and others with whom he had served. “I did not think we should see much more of you,” said Sir Boreas, laughing.

“I intended to live and die with you,” said Roden.

“We don’t have dukes; or at any rate we don’t keep them. Like to like is a motto which I always find true. When I heard that you were living with a young lord, and were going to marry the daughter of a marquis, and had a title of your own which you could use as soon as you pleased, I knew that I should lose you.” Then he added in a little whisper, “You couldn’t get Crocker made a duke, could you,—or a Registrar of Records?”

Mr. Jerningham was full of smiles and bows, pervaded thoroughly by a feeling that he was bidding farewell to an august nobleman, though, for negative reasons, he was not to be allowed to gratify his tongue by naming the august name. Crocker was a little shy;—but he plucked up his courage at last. “I shall always know what I know, you know,” he said, as he shook hands with the friend to whom he had been so much attached. Bobbin and Geraghty made no allusions to the title, but they, too, as they were severally greeted, were evidently under the influence of the nobility of their late brother clerk.

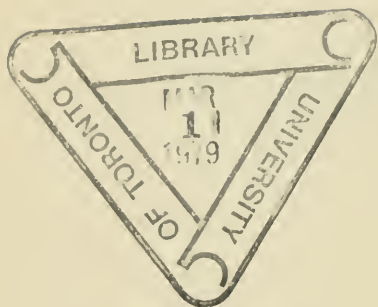
The marriage was duly solemnized when March came in the parish church of Trafford. There was nothing

grand,—no even distant imitation of Lady Amaldina's glorious cavalcade. Hampstead did come down, and endeavoured for the occasion to fit himself for the joy of the day. His ship was ready for him, and he intended to start now in a week or two. As it happened that the House was not sitting, Lord Llwdytlw, at the instigation of his wife, was present. "One good turn deserves another," Lady Llwdytlw had said to him. And the darlings were there in all their glory, loud, beautiful, and unruly. Lady Kingsbury was of course present; but was too much in abeyance to be able to arouse even a sign of displeasure. Since that reference to the "stumbling-blocks" had reached her husband, and since those fears with which Mr. Greenwood had filled her, she had been awed into quiescence.

The bridegroom was of course married under the simple name of George Roden,—and we must part with him under that name; but it is the belief of the present chronicler that the aristocratic element will prevail, and that the time will come soon in which the Registrar of State Records to the Foreign Office will be known in the purlieus of Downing Street as the Duca di Crinola.

THE END.

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